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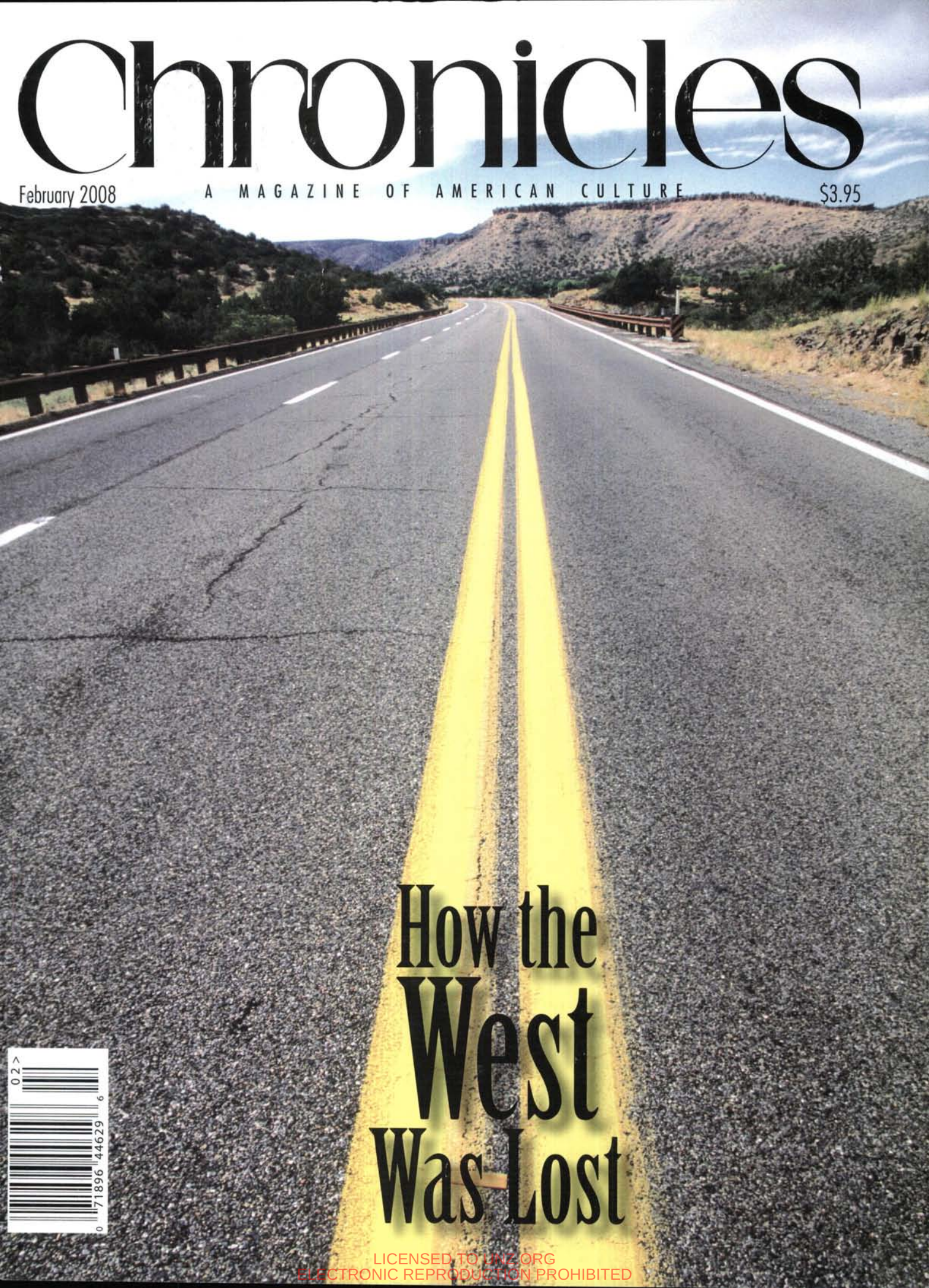

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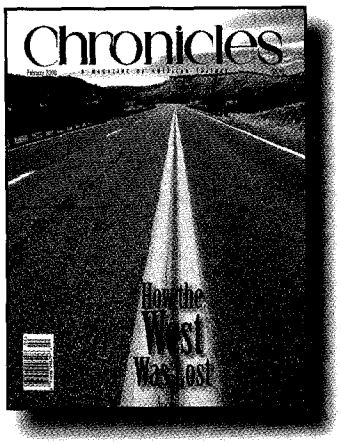

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Tearing Down the Wall

In "Freedom of Conscience" (*Perspective*, December), Thomas Fleming states that Thomas Jefferson's "'Wall of Separation' existed only in his mind." This phrase, of course, was included in Jefferson's 1802 letter to a group of Baptists from Danbury, Connecticut, as Dr. Fleming has pointed out in previous *Perspectives*. Rather than implying exclusionary intent, the "Wall of Separation" was designed to reassure the Danbury Baptists that their religious freedoms would be observed and preserved in our new republic. The First Amendment simply proscribes the federal government from establishing a national religion, but the myth that the Wall is included in the Constitution or the Bill of Rights gained currency in 1947 with the handing down of the Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Everson* v. *Board of Education*. Writing for the majority, FDR appointee Hugo Black incorrectly wrote that the "First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state." As might Dr. Fleming, I would challenge anyone to find its mention therein. However, as one infamous totalitarian opined, when one tells a lie often enough, it begins to engender belief.

Since that date, the "Wall of Separation" has become a mantra for leftist groups such as the ACLU, and, as our overweening federal government ever increases its grip on more facets of our lives, it threatens to deprive us of a growing number of such elemental religious freedoms as the wearing of a cross in the workplace.

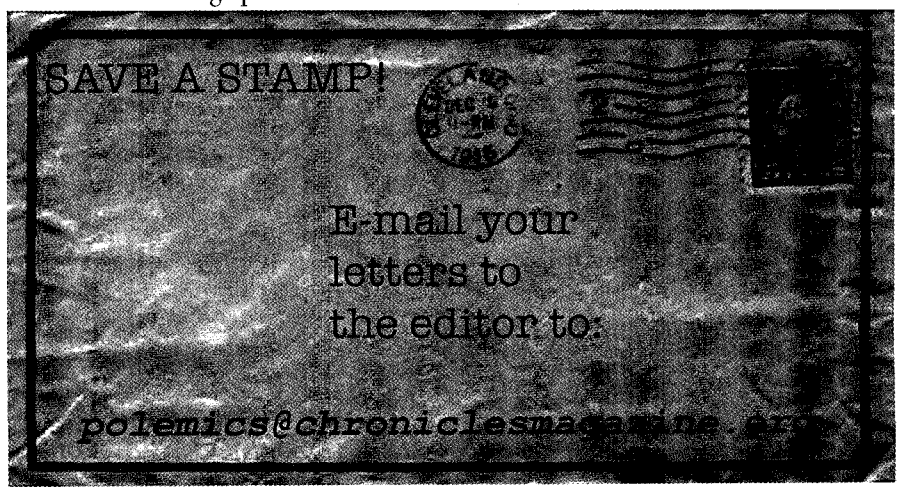
This tired canard should be exposed for what it is: specious license to intimidate and threaten many into giving up what may rightfully be some of their religious freedoms. However, with certain advocacy groups winning repeated court cases in favor of these rights, and now that the Federal Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, in a majority opinion, has referred to the "Wall" as "extra-constitutional," perhaps the light has finally penetrated from beneath the bushel.

—Gary Gillespie
Williamston, MI

On Irish Complaints

I would like to commend Roger McGrath for his fine piece on "The Fighting Irish" (*Sins of Omission*). I have only one very minor objection. In the last sentence of the article, Dr. McGrath suggests that perhaps it is the Irish-Americans who should complain about their lack of mention in Ken Burns' World War II documentary, *The War*. As Dr. McGrath so eloquently demonstrated in his article, however, we Irish-Americans do not complain; we act.

—Kieley Jackson
North Hollywood, CA



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by Leon Hadar

Another Middle East Fantasy

There is an element of cognitive dissonance in the way that many members of the reality-based community in Washington tend to approach U.S. policy in the Middle East. Many of my colleagues in Washington have urged policymakers to adopt a sense of realism about the American ability to achieve reconciliation between the ethnic and religious groups in Mesopotamia: Hey, be serious! These guys have been feuding since the British created Iraq after the Great War, and we Americans need to project some sense of humility when dealing with this complex reality. Let's stop deluding ourselves that brilliant American diplomacy is going to bring Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds around the campfire on the banks of the Euphrates to start singing "Kumbayallah."

But these same Realpolitik-oriented experts transform into born-again idealists when they insist that Washington could and should help resolve the conflict between Arabs and Jews. If the U.S. President will only get all of them to Camp David and build a cozy fire, they will come and make peace. Never mind that, just as in Iraq, these two peoples in Israel/Palestine have been fighting uninterrupted since the British invaded the area in World War I. The same analysts who express skepticism, if not cynicism, about the plan of the current occupant of the White House to turn Iraq into a model of political and economic freedom in the Middle East are also pressing Bush to exhibit some faith in the leadership of the United States to get the peace process moving ahead in the Holy Land.

This faith is grounded in unique historical circumstances: The successful efforts, launched by President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, to end the state of war between Egypt and Israel led directly to the diplomatic achievement of President Jimmy Carter in brokering a peace accord between Cairo and Jerusalem at Camp David in 1979. Since Dr. K's Shuttle Diplomacy in the Middle East and President Carter's Camp David Accord, generations of officials, experts, and journalists in Washington have been promoting the legend of America's role as a "peacemaker" in the Middle East.

But notwithstanding Kissinger's success as a world-class diplomat in mediating a stable cease-fire between Israel and Egypt, and President Carter's success in bringing about an Egyptian-Israeli peace (reflecting his strong religious beliefs as well as his skills as a negotiator), these two Americans didn't "make peace" between the Israelis and the Egyptians. The 1973 war demonstrated to Egypt that she didn't have the military power to defeat the Jewish state, while the Israelis recognized that the cost of maintaining the *status quo* in Sinai was becoming unbearable. In a way, the war and its aftermath helped to establish a certain regional balance of power that led the Israeli and Egyptian leaders to conclude that ending 30 years of war between them was in their respective national interests—starting with the disengagement agreement and ending with the accord at Camp David.

What Kissinger and Carter actually did was to facilitate the diplomatic process that brought about these arrangements. Thus, they made an important contribution to the successful conclusion of the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations, while strengthening the U.S. position in the region (by coopting Egypt into the pro-American camp during the last years of the Cold War).

The Egyptian and the Israeli leaders decided to meet at Camp David in 1979 only after Israeli foreign minister Moshe Dayan and Egyptian aide Hassan Tohami had agreed in advance on the basis for their negotiations: Israelis would return all of occupied Sinai to Egypt in return for Egyptian willingness to recognize Israel. What both the Israelis and the Egyptians wanted to win at Camp David (and succeeded in doing so) were long-term U.S. security commitments and economic assistance in exchange for signing the peace accord whose contours had been accepted before the talks had even started.

That Bill Clinton's Camp David II ended up as a major fiasco had nothing to do his diplomatic skills. President Clinton couldn't "make peace" because both the Israelis and the Palestinians had concluded that making the painful concessions on core national interests—dividing Jerusalem's holy sites; the "right of return" of the Arab refugees; the fate of the Jewish settlements—wouldn't be cost-effective from their respective standpoints. At the same time, each side calculated that using violence would force its adversary to surrender to its demands.

President George W. Bush and his aides seemed to have learned the lessons of both episodes when they decided that they needed to lower expectations this time in Annapolis, Maryland. They emphasized America's role as facilitator of a potential peace accord that could only be achieved if and when the Israelis and the Palestinians reached the conclusion that the costs of continuing to fight have become so high that they require agonizing compromises over Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees, and the Israeli settlements.

And there are really no signs that the Israelis and the Palestinians have reached such a stage—and no amount of public-opinion polls indicating that the two peoples want "peace" will change that reality. Hence, the most accommodating Israeli peace proposal on the various existing issues would probably be rejected by moderate Palestinians—and *vice versa*. In fact, both sides are now ruled by weak governments that have negligible political legitimacy and certainly won't be able to mobilize support for his-

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toric concessions on the core issues. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is as popular among Israelis as Bush is among Americans. And the government of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is basically ruling over an Israeli-American protectorate in the West Bank (while the elected radical Islamic Hamas controls Gaza).

American diplomacy is not going to make a lot of difference now. It's not surprising, therefore, that the "peace conference" in Annapolis proved nothing more than a useless exercise—not in statesmanship but in stage-crafting a media event. President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were hoping to highlight the emergence of an Israeli-Arab "consensus" that would help persuade both sides to move toward a resolution of the conflict. According to the Washington spin, since the "moderate" Arabs and Israelis were faced with such a menacing regional threat—Iran, with nuclear weapons and alleged designs to dominate the Middle East—they would be able to overcome their historic differences.

That inspiring narrative helped the Bushies to write the script for the media spectacle in Annapolis. The problem was that the "peace conference" had very little to do with the realities of the Middle East. None of the major attendees was buying into the notion that the "tribal" issues separating the Israelis and the Palestinians could be resolved by accentuating the outside "threat" of Iran.

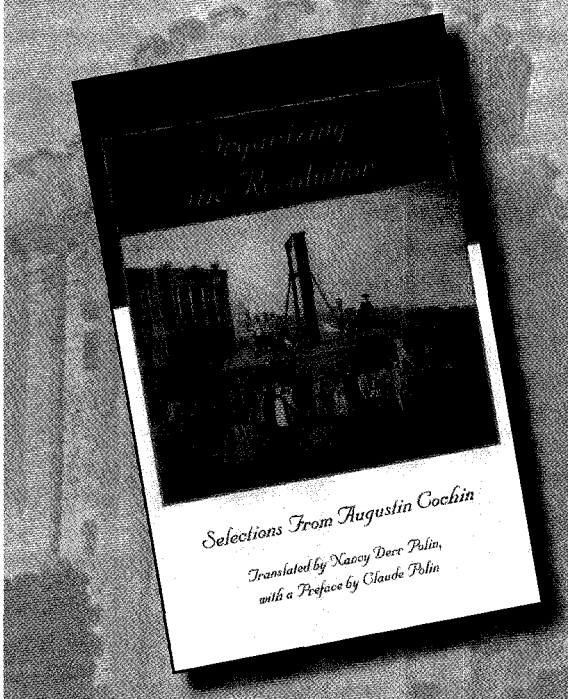
Olmert and Abbas couldn't even take the first steps toward overcoming their differences during the talks that led up to the meeting. And what was once envisioned as a three-day conference to kick off the negotiation of final-status issues was transformed into a pathetic 24-hour press conference during which President Bush played Master of Ceremonies.

The Saudis, who attended the meeting but refused to shake the hands of the Israeli officials, see the rise of Iran not as a challenge to the West but through the prism of the Sunni-Shiite divide. If anything, they would like to see reconciliation between Hamas and Abbas's Fatah, a move that the Americans and the Israelis oppose.

Facing strong U.S. opposition, the Syrians had to worm their way into the conference. The neoconservative strategists who continue to influence White House policy have insisted that the secular Ba'ath regime in Damascus is an ally of the ayatollahs in Iran, and they have pressed the Israelis not to open diplomatic negotiations with the Syrians, who are actually interested in distancing themselves from Iran and joining the moderate Arab fold.

The realists in Washington should recognize that peace will come to the Holy Land if and when the core issues separating Israelis and Palestinians are resolved. As for an agreement between Israel and Syria, the "territory for peace" formula that was applied at the original Camp David could serve as a basis for an accord between Jerusalem and Damascus—if both sides conclude that it is in their interest to do so. America could *help* to make that happen—but she cannot *make* it happen. ©

NEW FROM CHRONICLES PRESS



Organizing the Revolution

Selections From Augustin Cochin

translated by Nancy Derr Polin

Preface by Claude Polin

Augustin Cochin (1876-1916) undertook a minute analysis of the role that provincial clubs and societies played in the genesis of the French Revolution. His work shows clearly how the revolution was organized long before the events of 1789. This translation is an attempt to present his unfinished writings in a clear and coherent form.

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HONOR KILLING IN CANADA

As Canadians were preparing for the Christmas season, they were shocked to learn that Aqsa Parvez, a 16-year-old Muslim girl from the Toronto area, was strangled to death by her devout father, a cab driver of Pakistani origin. It appears her crime was a refusal to wear the traditional *hijab* when she was not at home and behaving like a typical Canadian teenage schoolgirl by posting photos of herself on Facebook wearing colorful clothing and accessories.

Friends describe Aqsa as a vibrant, fun-loving girl who liked to dance and take pictures. When she arrived at school, she would change into Western dress. A week before her death, she had left the family home to stay with friends because of arguments with her father and elder brothers. When she returned home to gather some clothing, she was killed. The father, Muhammad, has been charged with murder, and one of her older brothers has been charged with "obstructing police."

Honor killing is a common occurrence in many Muslim countries of the Middle East and South Asia. The term refers to the barbaric practice of killing female family members who violate the "honor" of the family, usually by compromising their sexual purity in some manner—but often, as well, by simply disobeying a dress code, refusing an arranged marriage, or being seen in the company of a man who is not a relative. As recently as December 19, a top Muslim cleric in Iran said that women who do not wear the *hijab* must die. The United Nations estimates that as many as 5,000 such honor killings take place annually.

Aqsa's murder has sparked a national debate in Canada about the cause of her death. Was it the result of a family argument that went wrong? Was it because of the generational gap that often exists between parents and their teenage daughters? Or was it yet another sad example of child abuse that has become all too frequent in our society? Few commentators have dared to place the blame on the loathsome tradition of "honor killing" or to suggest that her murder had anything to do with religion.

Canada's conservative-leaning newspaper, the *National Post*, in an editorial about Aqsa's death, warns its readers that nothing has yet been proved and reminds them that Canada's Muslim community is moderate by world standards. The *Post* writes that "Canada is no Europe where immigrant communities are left to fester within impoverished ghettoes in perpetuity—with their imported violent and backward practices passed on from one generation to the next." The suggestion here seems to be that Canada's Muslims are different from Europe's.

Spokesmen for Canada's Muslim community have been united in denouncing the slaying of the Toronto-area teenager but attribute it to a case of domestic abuse. An executive of the Canadian Islamic Council claimed the murder had nothing to do with Islam and said it was a teenage issue. Muslim leaders, however, also stressed the importance of women wearing the *hijab*, which is a vital part of Islamic culture. One of the leaders who is a member of the Canadian Council of Imams said that, if a daughter decides not to wear the *hijab*, her parents have failed.

A Muslim woman columnist for the national *Globe and Mail* complained that, because of this incident, "the Muslim community will once again be put under the microscope." She may have been referring to the concern caused by the arrest last year of 18 young Canadian-born Muslims who were planning to blow up the Canadian Parliament buildings and behead the prime minister; a follow-up poll revealed that 12 percent (roughly 84,000 of the 700,000 Muslims in Canada) believed that the terrorist plot was justified.

Canada has prided herself on being a welcoming country for immigrants and a champion of multiculturalism and diversity, but many Canadians are beginning to question the wisdom of continuing to accept immigrants whose religious beliefs appear to override many of the fundamental values of a liberal Western democracy. The tragic death of Aqsa Parvez should stimulate more open debate in Canada about this issue.

—James Bissett

WHO VOTES CATHOLIC?

Quite a few years ago (1977, to be exact), a colleague tried to convince me that the best way to make our college conservative was to set up a curriculum and a program in Christian studies that would appeal to conservative Catholics. There are lots of Catholics who are fed up with the "R.C. lite" of most so-called Catholic schools, he reasoned, and since there are more conservative Catholics than conservative anybody-elses, such a strategy would be money in the bank.

Actually, he was not that cynical. He was convinced that believing Catholics were running out of educational options for their sons and daughters—and he had a point. Since then, conservative Catholics have begun to put their educational money where their faith is. There hasn't been a stampede yet, but foot traffic has not been toward the educational left.

What about Catholic voters in the so-called public square? Barrels of ink have been spilled showing that Catholics, ever since the glory year of 1960, have been "swing voters." Catholics are always on the winning side in presidential elections. The old "lunch-bucket" Catholic voters who lined up for FDR sort of sidled over to Reagan but haven't been all that reliable as Republicans and probably won't be. Analysts from *Commonweal* and the

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Nation all the way over to *First Things* and *National Review* agree that conservative evangelicals are Red Staters to the core. But Catholics, they say, are more volatile, more nuanced—in other words, more capturable by whoever is arguing for what faction.

Politically, however, it is increasingly apparent that there are two kinds of Catholics: the Mass-going Catholics and the rest. Since there are about 35 million Mass-going Catholics, and since they tend to vote, one would think they should be taken seriously. They are not a bloc, to be sure, like Jews, African-Americans, and members of the Hollywood nation. But some things are clearly important to them, such as their religion, decent wages, stable family life, good education, low crime, and the abomination of abortion. About other things—free trade, immigration, and the war in Iraq being the most important—they are ambivalent.

The Bush administration has had a rhetorical fix on some of this with its "Catholic strategy" (the "culture of life" and "compassionate conservatism" resonate), but just as it has all but ignored evangelicals between elections, it has subordinated all the Catholic "social" issues (they are really moral) to war and trade. Republicans are betting their political lives on the hope that Democrats have completely written off Mass-going Catholics. Republicans also have to hope that Catholic ambivalence on trade, the war, and immigration will keep them from punishing the Republicans for their duplicity. The simple truth is, given the relative stability of other major voting groups, the party that gets the votes of Mass-going Catholics is going to win.

It is entirely possible that nobody will get them *en masse*. Mass-going Catholics are not single-issue voters, although their political participations certainly start with the life issues, which makes it unlikely that any Democrat will appeal to them. Some of us can remember when "pro-life Democrat" and "conservative Democrat" were not oxymorons. That day is unlikely to dawn again soon. Where are the old city machines when you really need them? Maybe they will be resurrected in Hispanic neighborhoods; until then, however, the Catholic ethnic vote is a thing of the past. Self-respecting Mass-going Catholics wouldn't vote for Kerry, so they certainly will not line up for Hillary, Barack, or John.

Among Republicans, who is making a good pitch? The former frontrunner, whose name ends in a vowel, is nominally Catholic, but Mass-goers can look his record up and down and not find one issue on which he squares with the Pope. He plays pretty well at *National Review*, but not in the pews. Will Mass-going Catholics be able to pull the lever for a Mormon? That's iffy at best. McCain's only campaign distinctive is enthusiastic support for the war, which will never be a defining issue for conservative Catholics. The millions of Catholic footsoldiers who enlisted in the Cold War against godless communism are not persuaded that a few Muslim terrorists warrant a holy war against all of Islam. That could change, but not, certainly, before November rolls around.

So who appeals to serious Catholics? Nobody has been courting them openly and aggressively. National Right to Life has endorsed Fred Thompson; their support hasn't helped him much, probably because his pro-life record, as good as it is, falls rather flat when he talks about letting the states resolve the issue. Mike Huckabee and Ron Paul have received ringing endorsements from more-or-less conservative Catholics: Huckabee, from Mark Stricherz of *Inside Catholic*, part of the former *Crisis* magazine's new internet operation; Paul, from historian Thomas Woods, by way of the paleolibertarian *LewRockwell.com*.

Each claims that, although his respective candidate is a Protestant with a capital *P*, he stands for exactly the things that should appeal to Mass-going Catholics: God, family, limited government, law and order, restraint in foreign policy—and above all, uncompromisingly, life. Woods' appeal is particularly passionate and moving. It is not hard to make a Catholic case for these two principled men. It is much harder, however, to make a case that Dr. Paul, at least, has a snowball's chance in you-know-where to win.

Where does that leave Mass-going Catholics? Maybe with no natural political home, and therefore with little chance to make the difference in 2008. But this is a powerful group, full of energy and almost clear enough about its ideas to be potentially even more influential than the evangelicals have been since about 1980. It remains to be seen who can put them to work.

—John Willson

THOUGHTS ON BROWN PEOPLE

A nine-year-old boy in Phoenix earned a three-day suspension from the Abraham Lincoln Traditional School for committing a "hate crime," reports the *Arizona Republic*. The boy reportedly used the phrase "brown people" while arguing with another student. He was then questioned by a detention-room officer—the mother of the offended "brown person"—who demanded to know "why he didn't want to cooperate with brown people." After incriminating himself by answering the leading question, the boy was forced to stand in front of the class and confess his sin. The *Arizona Republic* reports, with a straight face, that this is his "second offense using the phrase."

The real subject of the story, however, is not the virulent racism of this nine-year-old but the school's principal, Virginia Voinovich. In the parent-teacher conference that followed the incident, she admitted to having told the student that "in your heart you may have that feeling, and that is OK if that is your personal belief." She also told the boy's mother, Sherry Neve, that parents give up disciplinary rights when they send their children to school, and if she didn't approve, she could remove her son. Neve promptly obliged, and she is outraged at the school's treatment of the incident. (The boy denies ever having uttered the obscene phrase.) She claims Voinovich was influencing her son in a way she didn't approve. The Associated Press reports

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that Voinovich has since resigned.

As reported, the Big Story was not the boy's alleged verbal abuse, nor the line of leading questions that may have garnered a false confession. No, it was Principal Voinovich's remark, captured on tape by Mrs. Neve, that caused a public panic to ensue. The media is horrified that a school administrator would tell a child that it is "OK" to think "racist" thoughts, as long as you don't act on them. Some thoughts are acceptable; some aren't. And it is Principal Voinovich's job, and her school's job, and the job of all public schools in America to encourage the correct thoughts and punish the incorrect ones.

The Thought Police who have taken over our media, universities, and public institutions would claim they have no definition of "correct" and "incorrect" but seek toleration of all peoples and beliefs. Well, let us pretend for a moment that the boy had said that he finds it difficult to cooperate with "Christian people" and, assuming the case even raised the principal's eyebrow, that Voinovich had told him that it's OK to hate Christianity in his heart, so long as he does not act on that belief. Would the Associated Press have picked up the story? Would Voinovich have felt compelled to resign?

The media tolerates whatever works for the propagation of its leftist agenda—no matter how "intolerant" that behavior might otherwise be termed. The younger we catch those little racists, the better off we all are. And, thanks to infantcare and Head Start, we can catch them quite young. We have 18 to 22 solid years to indoctrinate other people's children in "acceptable" beliefs and opinions, and we must, if necessary, humiliate the nine-year-olds who step out of line.

Has it occurred to anyone that, if the poor kid wasn't a racist before, he surely will be now? Oh no, the powers-that-be continually preach. Everybody finds the phrase "brown people" offensive. In fact, everybody loves all races. Everybody thinks there is some truth to all religions (except Christianity, of course). Everybody believes Islam is a religion of peace. Get on the bandwagon, stupid.

The Thought Police haven't yet won the war, however. During a course I recently took entitled "Global Terrorism," many of my fellow students made it clear that they do not, in fact, believe Islam is a religion of peace. They weren't too fond of the hordes of illegal aliens pouring across our southern border, either. And a good number thought that allowing profiling at O'Hare would be downright sensible.

I don't attend a conservative school. Northern Illinois University is a public institution 65 miles from Chicago, the city that makes Illinois run blue in every election. The student body is about 25,000 strong, with a large percentage hailing from the city and the suburbs. And yet, contrary to what might be expected, we are not a homogenized leftist mass.

And if the reaction to the Brown People Crisis from independent news organizations and blogs—websites that are anything but advocates for racism or white supremacy—is any indication, America is not as uniformly politically correct as the politically correct would have us believe.

Despite the left's attempts at indoctrination, people simply aren't made to care about other races and other nationalities more than their own. It is human nature to love those closest to you, to identify most with those of your own race or nationality. And in spite of all the antifamily, anti-American rhetoric in the media and academia today, human nature hasn't changed. What has changed is our acceptance of it. The left has told us that Americans should weep as much for Pakistanis and Iranians as they do for their own people; marriage is a mere political arrangement; and children are a life choice, not a divine command. Far too many of us have swallowed it; many of us haven't, however, even if we at times lack the courage to face public contempt for expressing an errant thought out loud.

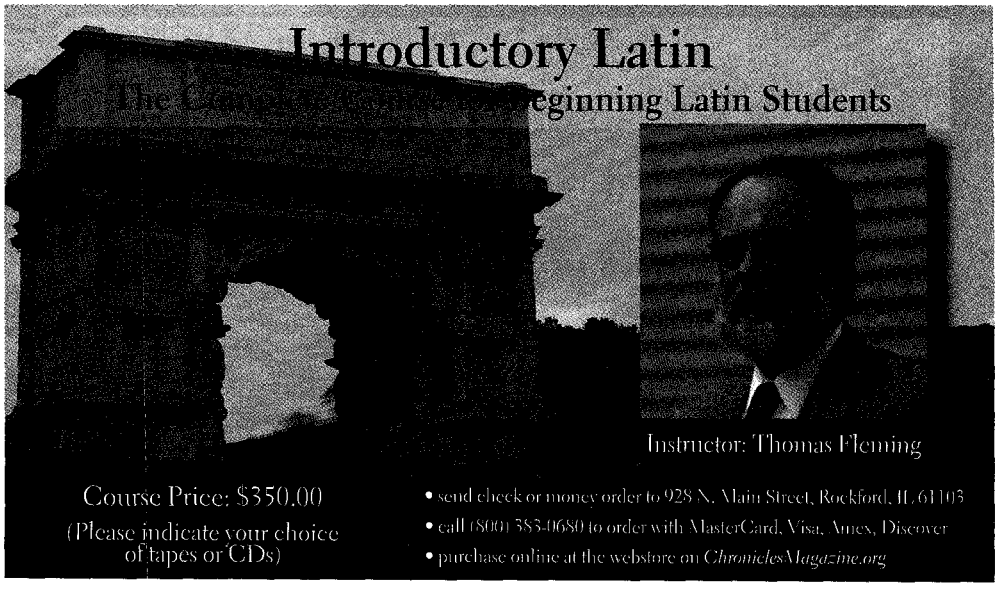
—*Nicole Kooistra*

OBITER DICTA

Making his debut in the pages of *Chronicles* is our poet this month, **John Freeman**, a native of Mississippi and a retired teacher who now lives in Harvey, Louisiana. His most recent collection of poetry is *In the Place of Singing* (Louisiana Literature Press, 2005).

Our cover photo and the photograph on p. 23 are provided by **Gregory McNamee** of Tucson, Arizona. The photo is of U.S. Route 66 at Crozier Canyon, east of Peach Springs, Arizona. A widely published writer, editor, and photographer, Mr. McNamee is the author, most recently, of *Moveable Feasts* (Praeger, 2006).

Our interior art is provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.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by Thomas Fleming

The Suicide of the West

The issue of Kosovo, which has been simmering since the United States waged a war of unprovoked and unjustifiable aggression against the former Yugoslavia, is boiling over. While Serbian "public opinion" is said to be more interested in economic questions, the resentment against the international community is real. As one senior advisor to Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica told the *Guardian,* "Serbia is Pompeii and Kosovo is Vesuvius."

With a few prominent exceptions, the member states of NATO, the European Union, and the United Nations favor speedy recognition of the rogue state being set up by Albanian narco-terrorists. The motives are various. Muslims naturally favor the creation of another Islamic state in Europe; many U.S. and Israeli politicians seem to believe that coddling Muslims in Europe reduces Islamic hostility in the Middle East—a position that only someone such as Lawrence Eagleburger could pretend to take seriously with a straight face. (Eagleburger has said explicitly that U.S. support for the Bosnian Muslims was designed to offset our antagonism to Muslims elsewhere in the world.)

A quick look at websites, blogs, and letters to the editor would suggest that many Americans, although (or rather, because) they know absolutely nothing of the Balkans, have concluded that it is a clear case of right and wrong: The Albanian majority in Kosovo was persecuted by the Serb majority in Serbia (of which Kosovo is a part, historically and legally). A comment on *AntiWar.com* says it all: "I don't pretend to know whether independence is the best course for Kosova . . . but it is not our place to be ordering anyone to say 'no to independence.' It would be better to follow the wisdom of the author of the Declaration of Independence."

On the theory of Locke, Jefferson, and Wilson, we should help to give Kosovo Albanians yearning to breathe free the same democratic rights that we enjoy in America. I heard this first from a pretty young graduate student in Balkan studies back about 1970. Like most graduate students, she knew nothing of her subject, but she breezily told me over drinks that Kosovo belonged to the Albanians, because they are in the majority. By now, she probably has a senior position in the State Department.

Before setting aside the current facts of the case, which apparently interest no one who is not an Albanian or a Serb, I would like to point out that the Albanians' historical case for independence is a pathetic lie, supported only by the disingenuous pseudoscholarship of British Islamophiles such as Noel Malcolm. Despite the difficulty of making ethnic generalizations about any part of the Balkans—Slavs once made it all the way to the Peloponnese, and both Turks and Venetians left genetic footprints nearly everywhere—one can say in broad terms that Kosovo has been part of the Serbian Orthodox heartland for a millennium.

Albanians have wandered in and out from time to time, but it was not until they were encouraged by the Ottomans that they made up a significant minority (in the 19th century), and not until they were encouraged by the communists that they grew to an increasingly large majority. Some of this population growth derives from the Albanians' high birthrate and the constant stream of immigrants from Albania, who, on the very day they arrive, enjoy the full civil rights denied the descendants of Prince Lazar. (Imagine what California will be like when illegal aliens have affirmative-action rights.) The decline in the Serbian population is caused by the relentless Albanian terrorism that has driven out many Kosovo Serbs. Anti-Christian terrorism is now conducted under the auspices of U.S.-controlled UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo), just as it is carried out in Iraq under U.S. protection.

The U.S. position, as articulated by our ambassador to the United Nations, Zalmay Khalilzad, ignores the peace terms agreed to by the United States and Yugoslavia, and, as Khalilzad argued on December 19, an independent Kosovo could not serve as a precedent for other secessionist minorities because of the Milosevic regime's policy of ethnic cleansing—no word about the hundreds of Christian churches dynamited by Albanians, and no word about the Albanian campaign of violent ethnic cleansing that has gone on for over a century. Why would Khalilzad be party to such a fraud? Surely not because he is an Afghan Muslim. The next time someone tells you that George W. Bush's America is a Christian nation, ask him why a Muslim represents us at the United Nations.

None of the facts matter to those who make the case for Albanian independence on the principle of majority rule and the right to self-determination. When American Southerners make this argument, they are no doubt thinking of Kosovo as another South Carolina, and on this principle, Carolinians should welcome the takeover of Anderson County by the Christian Exodus movement, whose leaders say they "share the values" of the state. This is the new theory of immigration: "I share your values; give me

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your country."

I can understand the Southern weakness for secession, but what Northern unionists and Lincoln admirers are thinking when they argue for the right of secession, I cannot imagine, though the Serbian government has cleverly been putting up posters of Lincoln to remind Americans of what we say we believe. Since unionists have no principled case to make that they are willing to apply to the United States, I can only address my arguments to those who believe that governments were instituted to secure natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that "whenever any government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it."

The main problem with this theoretical right of secession is our tendency to capitalize *Secession*, making it one more glorious political abstraction like Democracy and Equality or Nationalism and Unionism, or Abolition and the Great White Race. Political theory of nearly every type encourages this bad habit of dividing the world up into groups who are on one side or another of a divide dug out by political theory. These abstractions are dangerous toxins that can be fatal to the authentic traditions that make it possible for us to lead good lives. The great promoter of human rights in the American Revolution was the atheist tax collector Tom Paine, and we can expect to gain very little good from political theories that have always been hostile to our religion and our traditions.

Until some scientist is able to produce some evidence for the theory of natural rights—a theory that Jeremy Bentham correctly called "nonsense on stilts"—it is safer to regard natural rights (as distinct from civil rights) as a social invention that has outlived whatever limited usefulness it might once have had. When someone can show me a right in nature, in Scripture, in the Christian tradition, or in the great pre-liberal traditions of the West, then I shall be willing to listen to arguments based on this theory, but endless repetitions of a lie cannot make it truth.

Who in his right mind would frame a concrete action on the basis of an unproved theory? Many people in law enforcement once accepted Cesare Lombroso's theory that criminality was not only heritable but could be identified by physical characteristics—beady eyes, large jaws, fleshy lips—but I do not know of a case when someone was convicted on physiognomic evidence alone. When governments justify violence on the grounds of speculative theory—whether Marxism or Democratism or Unionism—the results are catastrophic.

Relations between states are sometimes supposed to be governed by laws and covenants; more typically, however, nations cheat, especially in war. The American government hardly takes the trouble to deny or justify such crimes as the kidnapping and imprisonment of Manuel Noriega, the illegal arrest and judicial murder of Saddam Hussein, the torture of prisoners, the overthrow of unfriendly regimes, and the attempted assassination of Fidel Castro and other hostile dictators. I shed tears for none of these targets, but if there were such a thing as human rights, the most nearly palpable rights would be incorporated into the various treaties we have made and laws we have passed against torture, assassination, and unprovoked aggression.

As a Christian, I would prefer to fight battles with people who play by the Christian rules roughly summarized in the Just War Theory of the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, our struggles are not with other Christians but with non-Christians, Muslims, leftists, and liberals, who could not so much as name the person who said "My kingdom is not of this world," and who live by such dicta as "All power grows out of the barrel of a gun," and

> A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.

I apologize to my readers for quoting a mass murderer, but Mao knew what his business was, and it is Mao, Stalin, and Hitler who are the most relevant authorities to cite in a discussion of foreign policy or the use of aggression. It is they who have written the rules of international law as played today by all parties, and the invocation of idealistic principles not only distracts us from reality but gives moral cover to gangsters.

I am far from being unsympathetic to secessionist movements, many of which I have defended in writing.

Secession, and the communities of scale that would result from secession movements, are the remedy, both in principle and in application, for many of the moral, social, and cultural problems engendered by Leviathan states around the globe. The briefest glance at human history would tell us that the greatest periods in the history of civilization have been dominated by the quarrelsome and petty city-states of ancient Sumer and Greece and medieval Italy, and I warmly endorse the sentiments of the great B.L. Gildersleeve, who, in addition to being America's greatest classical scholar, was also a Confederate cavalryman and Southern nationalist. Gildersleeve was tickled that even the grumpy people of uncivilized Vermont had their local pride: "Take away this local patriotism," he said, "and you take out all the color that is left in American life."

Not all secession movements have laudable objectives or deserve support, however. Some secessionist nationalities—Kurds and Chechens, for example—threaten peace and have a long record of violence. How would we go about making a distinction between good and bad secession movements in a place such as the Balkans? Inevitably, one has one's prejudices. Catholics will tend to support Catholic Slovenes and Croats, the Orthodox will naturally support the Serbs, while Muslims will fly to the Balkans, as many have done, for the sole purpose of finding Christians to slaughter. I have generally supported Balkan Christians against the aggressive Muslims who started their experi-

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ment in terror in Bosnia—with support from the CIA and the U.S. State Department and the help of our then-ally Osama Bin Laden, whose terrorists were given citizenship in Islamic Bosnia.

A once-substantial federal state has given birth to Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro, and the fissioning may not be over yet: Kosovo Albanians are now declaring their independence; the three parties in Bosnia—Muslims, Serbs, and Croats—still cannot stand one another, and, if foreign troops ever depart, the Bosnian Serb Republic will exchange partial autonomy for complete independence, leaving Croats and Muslims to kill each other to their hearts' content.

National self-determination is not an ultimate truth like the Holy Trinity, nor is it a Platonic ideal, nor even an institution, such as the British monarchy, that has a claim on the affections of British peoples. Secession and self-determination are simply expedient political devices, like so-called free elections, majority rule, people's democracies, and the dictatorship of the proletariat: beautiful words that are usually employed to justify what otherwise might be regarded as low and criminal aggression.

None of these struggles is legitimately America's business, but how as outsiders should we go about deciding where our sympathies lie? In contests between violent Christians and violent Muslims, as in Lebanon, while I strongly object to Christian attacks on Muslims, I do not pretend to be objective and do not wish to be. Objectivity is a lie adopted by anti-Christians to justify their hostility to the Faith. More broadly speaking, it is important not to overlook our sense of loyalty that arises out of ethnic and religious identity, because, if we did, we would be denying one of the principal justifications for legitimate secessions. My sympathy for the Scottish Nationalists derives in part from a fair-minded study of history, but it would be hypocritical to claim that the memory of Scottish ancestors who left after the '45 has nothing to do with the case.

Croats and Serbs offer an interesting case. The two nations entered the Balkan possessions of the Roman Empire about the same time, probably in tandem, and there were intermarriages over the centuries between the two groups. Today, Serbs and Croats speak overlapping dialects of the same language, and although in some respects the religion, culture, and national character of the two peoples are quite distinct, they eat similar cuisines, drink the same *slivovica*, and listen to each other's music.

When Croatia seceded for the second time from Yugoslavia, the proper procedure should have been international arbitration to work out a distribution of assets and liabilities, but backed up by her old allies in World War II (Italy and Germany), Croatia walked away with a debt-free candy store. George H.W. Bush and James Baker were at first reluctant to recognize the breakaway republics, but they did not want to let Germany play the dominant part in the Balkans. Eventually, the United States took the lead in promoting Bosnian Muslim independence and the Albanian Muslim takeover of Kosovo.

There are lessons to be drawn from this recent history. The first is that international law means nothing when great powers have something at stake. Secessionist movements succeed only when they enjoy the backing of a self-interested major power. The difference between the American secession from Britain in 1776 and the Southern secession from the United States in 1860 is France, just as the United States is largely responsible for the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine. Throughout the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the United States has played a major role in breaking up historic nations and unions, not on some idealistic principle of national self-determination but on the well-worn maxim of all empires, *divide et impera*; the intended result is to make them all—Montenegrins and Croats, Georgians and Ukrainians—slaves on the vast plantation of transnational corporations.

If someone asks if you believe in secession, the proper answer is: It depends on who is seceding from whom and for what reasons and in what manner. If we have historical ties with and affection for another nation, we have a right to be more sympathetic to their cause than we are toward our enemies. I do not really care whether or not an independent Kurdistan is set up—though I rather think it is imprudent at this time, because the Turks oppose it, and they are in an alliance with Israel, who calls our shots in the Middle East. But I cannot be expected to have much sympathy for a people who were major collaborators in the Armenian genocide, who even now are purging northern Iraq of an ancient Christian community. Kurds are the Albanians of the Middle East.

National self-determination is not an ultimate truth like the Holy Trinity, nor is it a Platonic ideal, nor even an institution, such as the British monarchy, that has a claim on the affections of British peoples. Secession and self-determination are simply expedient political devices, like so-called free elections, majority rule, people's democracies, and the dictatorship of the proletariat: beautiful words that are usually employed to justify what otherwise might be regarded as low and criminal aggression. If they are means for arriving at worthy and honorable ends, then they are useful. But to elevate a political device to an abstract good is to be guilty of idolatry. As Christians, we should pray that God will preserve all Christian peoples from the Muslims and atheists who hate us, but we should also pray that He may protect the poor benighted Muslims from the neoconservative ambitions that are destabilizing the entire planet. ◁

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The Everlasting Frontier

Wilderness Democracy

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Eric L. Luedde (www.farwhitenorth.com)

Although the American frontier was officially closed 118 years ago, Americans remain in thrall to its mythic spell and the romance of the American West. Europeans have always viewed our cultural obsession with condescension, though they themselves—the Germans and the Italians especially—are hardly immune to its allure. (On my first visit to the Grand Canyon in 1977, the mule-back party I joined on the ride down to the Tonto Plateau above the Inner Gorge included a very tall German with silver hair, wearing a powder-blue Hopalong Cassidy suit and ten-gallon hat to match it.) It is true that popular perceptions of the West have changed over the decades, and that Americans at the beginning of the 21st century imagine the West differently from how they did 50 years ago. The measure of that distance is the measure between the movie *True Grit* and the recently released *No Country for Old Men*, the film version of Cormac McCarthy's antimythic novel published in 2006. Nevertheless, the American public has yet to lose sight of the Western frontier, including those aspects of it that carry over into the present day, just as the modern West was adumbrated in its 19th-century incarnation.

The search for a convincing explanation for America's love affair with the West is as old as the phenomenon itself. Detractors have habitually associated the myth of the West with the myth of violence in America, suggesting that the direct connection between the two is guns and gun ownership, that supposed shibboleth of angry white men misguidedly protected since 1789 by the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. A recent book (*Democracy Without Nations? The Fate of Self-Government in Europe*) by Pierre Manent, a political philosopher at the Sorbonne and former associate of Raymond Aron, provides an invaluable insight into the matter.

Considering why the United States, so often the bellwether of Western liberal-democratic policy, diverges from the European nations in both her condemnation of abortion and her support for the death penalty, Manent offers an intriguing explanation. "In my view," he says,

> it is because the Tocquevillian country par excellence has not broken with the Hobbesian scheme of the Western nation-state. . . . [T]he connection between the state that holds a monopoly of force and the experience of the state of nature has never completely been forgotten there.

Americans' recognition of the legitimacy of the death penalty, Manent continues, has a direct philosophical connection with their insistence on the right to bear arms in self-defense. Europeans believe that cession to the state of the right of personal defense under the Hobbesian contract makes insistence upon that right contradictory. The opposing American view holds that, as the state is incapable of rendering the threat of violence nonexistent, a personal right to self-defense must be recognized in perpetuity.

> Europeans think and act as though the sovereign state has fulfilled its purpose so completely that they

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can now consign it to the thrift store, filed under "accessories." Americans, on the other hand, retain the feeling that they are living in a condition which makes this "accessory" necessary, even indispensable.

The truth of this *aperçu* seems as inarguable as it is obvious, once Manent has brought the point to our attention. For nearly three centuries, the frontier was America's state of nature, against which the pioneers and the settlers who came after them had ceaselessly to contend. As the fundamental reality behind our growth and westward expansion, this frontier state of nature became indelibly ingrained in the American psyche. When the actual frontier closed, and the Rocky Mountain and Far West were finally tamed (relative, that is, to the rest of the country), the frontier state of mind remained wide open. The reality of the frontier was no more, but nostalgia for that reality remained. Yet not nostalgia only. First necessity, then romantic myth determined that the state of nature should remain an integral part of the American imagination. But a third component also played a role. That component was—and is—the American myth of freedom, meaning individualism and self-government, grounded in the conviction that, even if the achievement of an all-competent, all-protective Hobbesian state were possible, it shouldn't be. For Americans, even when they do not practice at the polls what they preach to one another, all-protective government is tyrannical government, worthy to be combated tooth and nail, and pulled down. Europeans, with their monarchical and authoritarian past, do not share what appears to them, paradoxically, a reactionary view. For the peoples of Europe, democratic progress—indeed, freedom itself—means, as Manent argues elsewhere in his book, the total embrace of a depoliticized administrative state dedicated to the enforcement of "rights."

Before the 1960's, the American imagination never tended toward ennobling the American Indian. Instead, it ennobled the wilderness in which the Indian dwelt. We see an entirely different mind from the European one at work here. For Americans, innocence was the essential quality of the wilderness, not of the wild man. Nor did the white man—the pioneer, the settler, even the soldier—who ventured onto the frontier, and into the wilderness that lay beyond it, discover innocence by going native.

The myth of the American West is essentially an expression of Americans' commitment to that part of human nature that never can—nor should—be removed from the state of nature, and a celebration of limited government that must never be permitted to realize the Hobbesian contract as embodied in an all-powerful and all-embracing state. Yet this myth has allure for some Europeans as well, whether they understand the basis of its appeal or not.

Historically, the Western mystique assumed popular form through the media of yellow journalism, pulp fiction, frontier memoirs, painting (Remington and Russell), movies, and television. In this form, it has indeed placed a preponderant and excessive emphasis on guns, violence, ethnic warfare, and lawlessness, though even in the popular imagination, law and order always prevail in the end over savagery and chaos. Above the popular level, however, the mythology of the American West displays a sophistication and profundity embodied in universal themes. What, in the popular imagination, takes form as the vulgar contest between good guys and bad guys, black hats *versus* white ones, is raised by the artistic imagination to the eternal opposition between civilization and barbarism, metaphysical order and chaos.

And yet, unlike its European counterpart, the American imagination has injected a new element into the classic opposition between the civilized and the savage, an element that complicates this opposition by creating a tension internal to the notion of savagery itself. This element is "wilderness," and it is a wholly American one, "native to this place" as Wendell Berry would say. It does not at all reflect, for example, the romantic pre-civilizational fantasies of Rousseau, who invented a creature he called "the noble savage." Before the 1960's, the American imagination never tended toward ennobling the American Indian. Instead, it ennobled the wilderness in which the Indian dwelt. We see an entirely different mind from the European one at work here. For Americans, innocence was the essential quality of the wilderness, not of the wild man. Nor did the white man—the pioneer, the settler, even the soldier—who ventured onto the frontier, and into the wilderness that lay beyond it, discover innocence by going native. (Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America*, describes in some amazement visiting pioneer cabins surrounded by primeval forest in the wilds of the Upper Midwest in which the householder sat in a crude chair on a dirt floor, reading his newspaper and hungry for the visitor to drop by and argue politics with him.) What westering Americans could find, on the frontier and in the wilderness, was a society simpler, more sincere, more democratic, more free than the civilized society they left behind in Massachusetts, New York, or Virginia—a society that, more often than not, they had to construct for themselves. Paleface society (to adopt Bernard DeVoto's distinction) was constrictive and hypocritical, and Redskin society (an obvious misnomer) was freer, more honest, more open, more basic, more real—more civilized, in short, in all essential ways, just as the individual himself, being free, was more authentic, as we should say today. It was in quest of such a society, not of a wilderness utopia, that Huck Finn's creator has him contemplate "light[ing] out for the territory"

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at the end of his novel.

America gloried in her frontier, and in the life that wilderness offered. She also had to endure it—those men and women who wrested the land from the Indians, settled it, subdued it, and held it against the lurking aborigines. And to endure, the frontiersmen needed law and order—and government, but no more of it than was necessary. Their dilemma was this: The Western frontier required political and civic institutions to transform itself into an ordered society in order to survive and flourish, but no political institutions imaginable in that time and place could relieve the frontiersman and settler of the necessity to assume a personal responsibility for his physical safety and economic security. Readers of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* will recall how the sparsely scattered settlers across Indian Territory in Kansas and Missouri were dependent in the early 1870's for their safety on the soldiers stationed at Fort Dodge. But in case of an Indian raid, those soldiers might, or might not, arrive in time. There was of course no organized police force, and Mrs. Wilder never mentions the presence of a sheriff and deputies. Charles Ingalls had his gun, his powder horn, his home-molded bullets in a deerskin pouch, an ax, and a Bowie knife with which to protect his wife and daughters. Ingalls, in spite of his wanderlust and taste for solitude, like most frontiersman was never a man to refuse the benefits of progress when they came his way. Probably, he would have welcomed a sheriff had one been deputized by his few neighbors; perhaps, he might even have become a deputy himself, for a few dollars' monthly pay. Nevertheless, any social or political contract Ingalls or men like him would have willingly entered into would have been enormously less comprehensive than the Hobbesian contract. (Theodore Roosevelt, the apostle of American organization and empire, once praised Dakota Territory as a place where "you can plug a man in the stomach and get away with it.") So long as there was a general store and a school within reasonable distance, Ingalls was content to live under a government 1,500 miles away in Washington whose hand he hardly ever felt, like that of the few mediating institutions between him and it. For the Ingalls family, civilization—the Bible, literacy, Christian morals, civilized manners, cleanliness and sobriety, nourishing food conscientiously prepared, Pa's careful craftsmanship, Ma's china shepherdess brought out from the East—was a domestic project. Wherever they could, they did for themselves—by choice and by necessity. In the mythology of the West, the two go together, always joined by the conjunction.

From the foundation of "a city upon a hill" lifted above the surrounding wilderness, the single great theme of the American imagination has been the tension between civilization and wilderness, and the conflicting merits associated with each of them. It is the ultimate concern of much of our literary heritage, from the Puritans to William Faulkner, including those instances where the terms of opposition are not identified directly or explicitly as such. (Even the detective novels of Raymond Chandler, that aloof English urbanite transplanted to Los Angeles in the 1920's, can be read as portraying the American frontier at the end of its string, baffled by the obdurate Pacific and thrown back upon itself to create a new urban frontier populated by white savages of a thoroughly modern kind.)

America gloried in her frontier, and in the life that wilderness offered. She also had to endure it. And to endure, the frontiersmen needed law and order—and government. Their dilemma was this: The Western frontier required political and civic institutions to transform itself into an ordered society in order to survive and flourish, but no political institutions imaginable in that time and place could relieve the frontiersman and settler of the necessity to assume a personal responsibility for his physical safety and economic security.

After 30 years, my mind goes back often to the German tourist in his powder-blue Hopalong suit precariously astride a mule, descending by winding, narrow scratches on the cliff face through clouds of red dust, and so bewitched by the view into the purple abyss below that he failed entirely to notice the thick-bodied rattlesnake that slithered across the trail between the fore and rear hooves of his mount. The Germans, of course, have always been fascinated by geology and paleontology, and the Grand Canyon, for a student of these sciences, must have an effect equivalent to that of the Beyreuth Festival on an acolyte of Wagner. Still, I wonder, what did the man see—not just there in the canyon depths, but also in the vast and varied Wagnerian landscape stretching beyond it, from San Diego and El Paso as far as Denver and Great Falls? Perhaps, he saw what I see: bombastic, fantastic nature in its untamed natural state, existing from eons before the state of nature was ever thought of and as unbindable by the Hobbesian contract as the universe itself; nature that finds barely an echo in the well-populated, well-cultivated, well-regulated, comfortably civilized landscapes of Europe. We Americans have our origins in Europe, and in our genes are the ancestors of our European contemporaries. Is it so strange that they—at least, some of them—should be liable to the same visceral instinct that we find so powerful and undeniable? I think not, and I believe further that our European cousins should work to discover that instinct and, having discovered, develop it. In doing so, they might discover themselves and, in the process, a means to the ultimate salvation of their own beleaguered continent.

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The Curious Career of Billy the Kid

The Man Behind the Myth

by Gregory McNamee

For most of the 19th century, the American West was a fairly tranquil place. The myths of Hollywood and the wishful thinking of certain revisionist historians notwithstanding, throughout the region, for every gunfighter there were a hundred stockbrokers, and for every outlaw, ten-thousand farmers. The West was urban as much as rural, settled as a joint venture of corporations and the federal government. (For more on that, see Richard White's *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, among other recent works of western history.) In cities such as Denver, Seattle, and even Tombstone, few citizens knew how to use a firearm, owned a gun, or had need to. The decades-long wars against the Native Americans were staged in remote corners of the country, far from the haunts of ordinary citizens, and, as for bad men, few but the local tall-tale spinner had ever seen one.

Lincoln County, New Mexico, was a notable exception. For three decades beginning in the 1860's, the sparsely settled pocket of south-central New Mexico Territory saw more than its share of violence: regular raids on the part of the Mescalero Apaches and Indians from farther afield; crimes fanned by racial hatred between Anglos and Hispanics; bad blood between farmers and ranchers, ably documented in Conrad Richter's novel *The Sea of Grass*; and a business rivalry that would lead to the so-called Lincoln County War.

Against this backdrop of bloodshed, many legends arose, but only one has endured: that of a young man named William Bonney, known in his time and ever after as Billy the Kid.

He was born between 1857 and 1860, probably in New York. (As befits a legend, the details of his birth are hazy.) The son of Irish immigrants who had fled the Potato Famine, his given name was—we think—Henry McCarty. In 1873, his widowed mother moved to Santa Fe, where she married another Irish settler, William Antrim, and her son took his stepfather's name. The new family moved southwest to Silver City, hard by the Western Apaches' mountain strongholds, hoping to find their fortunes in the mines.

Instead, William Antrim and his wife sickened and died, the victims of one of the many influenza epidemics that swept the world in the late 19th century. For the next year, the orphaned Henry skulked about Silver City, gambling, smoking, drinking, committing petty thefts. Within a year the bright, formerly well-behaved lad found himself in jail for having stolen a bushel of clothes from the town's Chinese laundry. Rather than await trial, Henry Antrim, slender and short for his age, shinnied up a chimney that opened into his cell and disappeared into the night.

He made his way across the border into Arizona and sought honest work, finding it in the Sulphur Springs Valley laboring as a wrangler on the transplanted Texas cattleman Henry Hooker's vast ranch. For a time, things seemed to be going well for "the Kid," as the older cowboys called him. No one asked questions, and most looked the other way whenever he stole a saddle, a blanket, even a horse from Fort Grant, the nearby Army post. When soldiers eventually caught him in the act, he managed to escape northward to the gold and copper mines at Globe, Arizona. What Kid Antrim, as he sometimes called himself, did there is lost to history.

Two years later, he was back at the Hooker ranch, working as a cowboy. This time, he kept away from the Army post, but, all the same, he fell afoul of Francis Cahill, an ex-soldier living at the Hooker place. Nicknamed Windy for his explosive rages, Cahill took every opportunity to terrorize the youngster, slapping and insulting him. On August 17, 1877, Cahill hit the Kid one time too many, and the Kid struck back. Cahill drew his service revolver; they wrestled, and the gun went off in Cahill's belly. He died the next day, but not before naming his assailant.

The Kid fled Arizona, and, in the autumn of 1877, a young man who called himself Sam H. Bonney arrived in Lincoln County. He could not have picked a worse time to come. In 1877, residents of the county faced frequent raids by the nearby Mescalero Apaches, who killed a cowboy or farmer from time to time and made off with cattle and horses. Hispanic *campesinos*, along with Anglos who married into Mexican families, had not only the Apaches to fear, but a local, murderous version of the Ku Klux Klan led by ex-Confederates. But these were small worries compared with the violence wrought by members of "the Ring," a Santa Fe-based group of businessmen whose ranks included two of Lincoln's most prosperous merchants, J.J. Dolan and L.G. Murphy, Irish immigrants locked in rivalry against John Chisum, the legendary rancher, for control of southern New Mexico's cattle industry and all that came with it: banking, real es-

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tate, mercantile commerce, and the railroad.

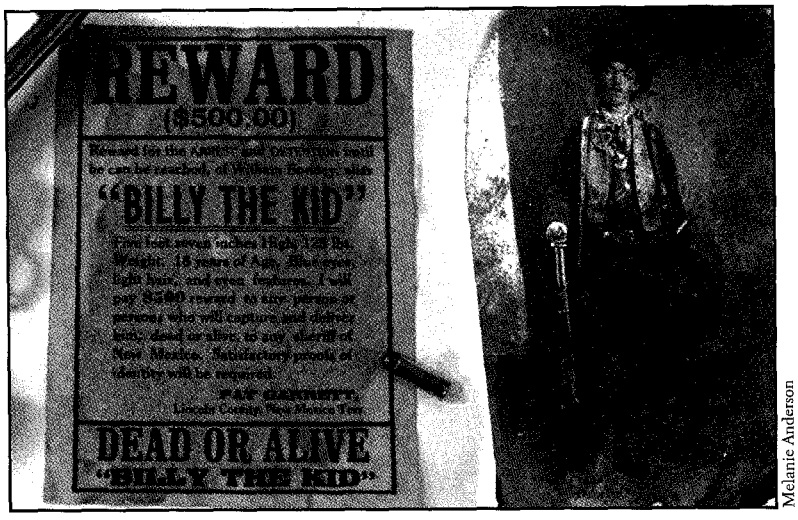
Chisum's closest ally in Lincoln was an Englishman named J.H. Tunstall, who had come to America with the goal of becoming rich before his 30th birthday. He was well on his way at 24, the owner of a working ranch, the Lincoln County Bank, and a dry-goods store that competed with L.G. Murphy & Co. Tunstall found a friend in Alexander A. McSween, a Scottish-born lawyer whom J.J. Dolan accused of embezzling funds. Briefly jailed, McSween made common cause with Chisum and Tunstall against the Ring. Tunstall made another friend when young Billy signed on with him as a ranch hand.

When he entered Tunstall's employ, Bonney took on a new air of seriousness, working hard. Events would swiftly catch up with him, though. Back in Lincoln, the Dolan-Murphy and Tunstall-McSween factions filed one lawsuit after another—the one continuing to charge embezzlement, the other tax fraud. The Ring, in the meantime, bought the town's sheriff, William Brady, who attacked Tunstall's general store. Tunstall arrived in Lincoln with Billy Bonney to challenge Brady in court. At the same time, a sheriff's posse went out to round up Tunstall's cattle. The young Englishman ordered Billy to return to the ranch and await instructions.

The next day, Tunstall himself set out for his ranch. On the way, members of the posse, led by J.J. Dolan, ambushed and murdered him. Later mythmakers have him taking up arms at that very moment, but Billy Bonney first went to Lincoln Constable Atanacio Martinez and swore out a complaint against members of the posse. Martinez deputized Billy, and they went to serve Dolan's arrest warrant at the Murphy & Co. store. When they arrived, Sheriff Brady, reinforced by soldiers from Fort Stanton, arrested the two. Martinez was released, but Billy Bonney spent the night in jail while, in another part of Lincoln, John Tunstall was buried.

On gaining his freedom, Billy Bonney joined with other Tunstall ranch hands in a ten-man vigilante force called the Regulators, led by an older man named Dick Brewer. They began hunting down members of the posse and killing them one by one, a vendetta that went on until midsummer and left dozens of men, including Sheriff Brady, dead. The governor of New Mexico Territory, James Axtell, outlawed the Regulators and ordered a new posse to go after them. On July 15, Billy and company returned to Lincoln and took up positions in McSween's house along with the attorney himself, while Dolan's gang laid siege for four days. On the fifth, they were joined by a small force from Fort Stanton, who brought along a Gatling gun and a howitzer. When McSween tried to surrender, he was cut down in a storm of bullets; Dolan's men later set his body on fire. The next day, a Lincoln jury, doubtless aware of the Ring's power, declared that he had died while resisting arrest.

Billy Bonney, now in command of the remaining Regulators, fled. The Dolan gang fanned out in pursuit, raping, pillaging, and murdering along the way, and blaming their crimes on the Kid. These were the worst days of the Lincoln County War, and they came so prominently to national attention that President Rutherford B. Hayes removed the hopelessly corrupt Axtell as governor and appointed in his place Gen. Lew Wallace, a Civil War hero whose novel *Ben-Hur* would be published a few months later. For more than a year, Wallace tried to convince Billy Bonney to give himself up so that he might testify in court against the Dolan-Murphy faction; their exchange of letters, with Wallace's courtly prose and Billy's simple declarations, marks what might have become a friendship under other circumstances.



Melanie Anderson

When Billy was finally arrested in March 1879, however, he was not allowed to testify. Instead, he was charged with Sheriff Brady's murder, which he did not commit. True to form, the Kid escaped. Not long thereafter, all charges against Dolan and his men were dropped. Now contemptuous of the law, Billy Bonney set out on the outlaw trail, rustling cattle and horses and selling them in Mexico. Strangely, the vast herd owned by John Chisum was one of the Kid's earliest targets. Chisum retaliated by hiring a laborer named Joe Grant to assassinate the thief, but the Kid shot Grant instead, the second time he is known to have killed.

In the autumn of 1880, while the Kid drifted from one camp alongside the Pecos River to another, the citizens of Lincoln elected Pat Garrett sheriff. Garrett set out in pursuit of the Kid, and his posse soon had their turn at killing off Regulators one by one. Two days before Christmas, Garrett, who knew Billy casually, caught up with him at a small ranch called Stinking Springs and, after a brief gunfight, led him off in chains to Fort Sumner. His guards later transferred Bonney to jail in Santa Fe, from which he wrote to Governor Wallace to plead his case. Wallace was away on a trip to the East, and Billy's letters went unanswered even after he returned.

By the spring of 1881, thanks to enterprising journalists, Billy Bonney was known nationally as Billy the Kid. (Larry McMurtry's 1989 novel *Anything for Billy* does a fine job

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of pegging their role in the unfortunate young man's rise to fame.) Readers across the country now followed the story as Bonney was led to a courtroom in the southern New Mexico town of Mesilla, found guilty of murdering Sheriff Brady, and sentenced to hang. On April 22, 1881, Billy the Kid was taken to Lincoln to await his execution. His jailers should have known by now that walls did not easily hold him. Six days later, he overpowered his guards, killing them both.

They were the last men to die at his hands. It is worth noting at this point that the number of dead who can be directly attributed to the Kid now stands at four, a far cry from the psychopathic tolls that legend would attach to his name. But then, Daniel Boone suffers the same problem: He complained late in his lifetime that he had killed only three men, and then in self-defense; Fess Parker usually knocked down at least that many Shawnee before the first commercial break of the long-running TV series that bore the great explorer's name.

Pat Garrett tracked Billy down at the Fort Sumner home of Pedro Maxwell, a local rancher. Late on the evening of July 14, 1881, Garrett crept into the room where Bonney lay dozing. He must have made a noise, for the Kid sprang to his feet and called out "*¿Quien es? ¿Quien es?*"—bilingualism having been a useful skill on the border then and now, a phrase in the Spanish that he spoke so well, having been, after all, Catholic and Irish despite having been in English employ. Garrett replied to the inquiry by firing twice. One bullet struck the unarmed Bonney in the chest, and he died instantly. He was anywhere between 21 and 25 years old.

Henry McCarty. Henry Antrim. Billy Antrim. The Kid. Kid Antrim. Billy Bonney. Billy the Kid. How is it that this simple frontier boy, steered by fate into crimes far beyond his apparent inclinations, became the subject of so many legends? How is it that a man with fewer victims to his name than any one of dozens of criminals in the last few years became one of America's most notorious outlaws? The myth, of course, is well served by the obscurity of his origins, by the shadows that fall between his real and imagined deeds.

He was hardly cold in the ground before the first book about him, Thomas F. Daggett's wildly imaginative *Billy Le Roy: The Colorado Bandit* appeared. In 1881 and 1882, another seven "yellow novels," as pulp fiction was then called, would appear with some avatar of the Kid in the starring role. Most depicted him as a red-eyed murderer who had as many corpses to his credit as he had years—the highest count runs to 26 men, not counting Mexicans and Indians, who in those days were ranked on the lower rungs of the evolutionary ladder. Looking forward to a comfortable retirement, perhaps, Sheriff Pat Garrett produced his own memoir a year after he shot Bonney to death. Entitled *Billy, the Kid: The Noted Desperado of the Southwest, Whose Deeds of Daring and Blood Made His Name a Terror in New Mexico, Arizona & Northern Mexico*, it was substantially ghostwritten by Lincoln journalist Ash Upson. Garrett's account lies at the foundation of the Billy the Kid myth, repeating stories that the authors surely knew to be untrue, inventing others to liven up the narrative.

Among the most enduring of the Garrett-Upson fabrications, perpetuated in dime-store Westerns ever since, is that the Kid killed his first man at the age of 12 for insulting his mother. Having launched that bit of fiction, the authors of *Billy, the Kid* have their protagonist gunning down one innocent soul after another for the pleasure of watching them die. More than one historian has suggested that Garrett and Upson gave Bonney a murderous reputation in order to make Garrett's having shot the unarmed Kid (and earning a reward of $500) palatable to their readers. Alexander McSween's widow, understandably biased, recalled years later that Garrett was well known for firing on his targets without warning. In any case, Garrett would be killed in 1908, a victim of a late iteration of that KKK band, well funded by a New Mexico senator, Albert Fall, who would be implicated in the Teapot Dome scandal in the 1920's.

A Chicago journalist named Walter Noble Burns took Bonney's legend on a new tack in 1926 with *The Saga of Billy the Kid*, repeating earlier inventions while giving his subject all the trappings of a folk hero, a Robin Hood for the coming Great Depression; Burns did much the same with Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday, whose memories he revived at about the same time. Hollywood embraced the outlaw-as-hero myth with King Vidor's 1930 film *Billy the Kid*, with John Mack Brown in the starring role. His wild-eyed portrayal established a model that most of the 40-odd films since made have repeated to some degree, among them Marlon Brando's quirky rendering in *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961) and Michael J. Pollard's maniacal performance in *Dirty Little Billy* (1972).

Oddly, the film that best captures the historical realities and complex politics of the Lincoln County War is the Brat Pack extravaganza *Young Guns* (1988). A smirking Emilio Estevez takes a sadistic pleasure in rubbing out his enemies that the documentary evidence simply will not admit, but otherwise, the screenwriters have most of their facts straight. Few critics noticed, or cared, but audiences flocked to the film—which suggests that when the next Western revival hits Hollywood, there ought to be room for another Billy the Kid flick that gets even closer to the real story without, of course, sacrificing the requisite gunplay.

We are left with an enigma. Barring the discovery of a secret cache of biographical data—Henry McCarty's birth certificate, say, or an autobiography in his own hand—we probably know as much as we ever will about the curious career of Billy the Kid, a life far removed from the legend he inspired. Like so many who figure in the history of the American West, what stands before us is not a man but a myth. It will likely stand there, in the splayed-leg stance of a gunfighter, forever. ◁

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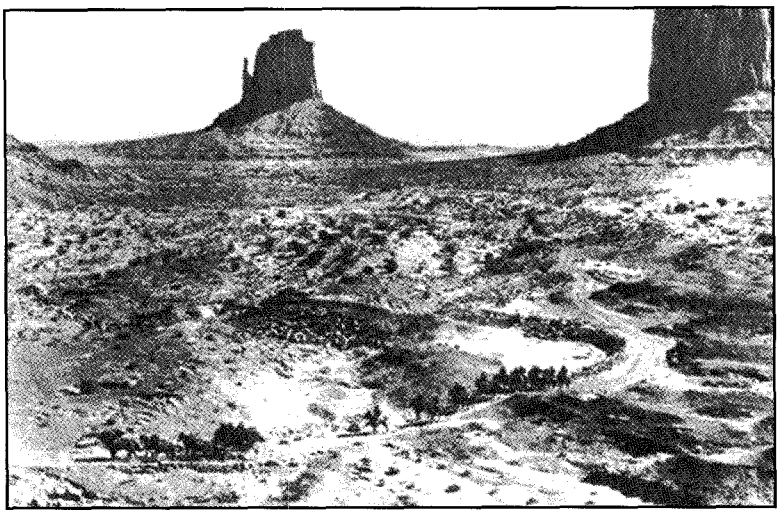
Westerns

America's Homeric Era on the Silver Screen

by Roger D. McGrath



Melanie Anderson

Some time around 800 B.C., Homer put the heroic tales of the Achaeans into lyric form: battles, expeditions, adventures, conquests. The tales were inspiring, heroic, tragic, triumphal. Greeks recited Homer's iambic pentameter for centuries; so, too, did we as schoolchildren—as inheritors of Western civilization. We Americans, however, also have our own Homeric Era. While the Greeks moved from north to south through their peninsula and eventually into the Peloponnesus, Americans moved from east to west across the continent and eventually into California. Recalled most vividly, though, is the trans-Mississippi West. That's where the mountain men trapped beaver, the miners struck gold, the cowboys drove cattle, the cavalry fought Indians, the magnates of industry built railroads, the gunfighters dueled.

The pioneers of the trans-Mississippi West came from every corner of the United States: puritanical Yankees from New England, cavaliers from the Old South, Pennsylvania Dutch from the Susquehanna Valley, and Scotch-Irish frontiersmen from the length and breadth of the great Appalachian range. They also came from overseas: Dutchmen from Germany; Scandinavians from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; Limeys from England; Welshmen from Wales; Cousin Jacks from Cornwall; Highlanders and Lowlanders from Scotland; and, in the greatest numbers, Mikes and Pats from Ireland's Old Sod. There were others, too, but the great bulk of pioneers were the product of internal migration or immigration from northwestern Europe. Celtic and Germanic tribesman had trekked, generation by generation, from central Asia to the British Isles. In America, these same peoples would move in a powerful wave from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Their fights, discoveries, tragedies, adventures, and conquests would rival anything the ancient Greeks could offer. It is not surprising that Westerns became a staple of movie production during the silent era—we were watching ourselves conquer a continent and build a new civilization. There was something else, though. We were returning to a raw wilderness that excited the senses for the very reason that it had not yet been conquered. It was threatening and dangerous—and it was wide open for those with grit, perseverance, and spirit. There was a decline in Westerns when talkies were first introduced, but once outdoor sound recording was improved, the Old West came roaring back on the silver screen. Many of these movies during the 1930's were low-budget or B-Westerns. John Ford changed all that with *Stagecoach* in 1939.

Stagecoach may be my favorite Western. Back in the mid-1980's while teaching the American West at UCLA, I was interviewed by a Canadian journalist for an article he was writing on the 19th-century frontier. As an aside, he asked me to list my ten favorite Westerns. He caught me off guard—I had never really given it much thought. I paused for a few seconds, trying to recall my favorites, and then told him I would attempt to list them chronologically; off the top of my head, I couldn't possibly order them by precedence. *Stagecoach* was the earliest favorite I could recall. When I had finished, I had a baker's dozen. I couldn't stop at ten. All these years later, I still have the

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same baker's dozen, and I still don't think I could order them by precedence, although, with a gun put to my head, I would narrow the list to *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers*, both products of John Ford's genius.

Admittedly, listing favorite Westerns is a highly subjective exercise. However, I think there are some objective criteria that can be applied when evaluating a Western. Does the movie have grand vistas that reveal not only the spectacular beauty of the West but the raw power of nature? Is there a musical score that sweeps us away to another time and place, plucks the chords of our ancestral soul, and helps tell the story? Are there mustangs, Appaloosas, paints, and quarter horses, and stunts with horses that remind us that real cowboys found work in Hollywood? Are rifles and revolvers common but cherished tools? Does the movie capture the spirit of the times and the character of the people? Are such values and characteristics as courage, perseverance, optimism, hospitality, fair play, deference to women, and loyalty to kith and kin on display and integral to the story? Are the characters well developed, and are there those we can empathize with and root for? Not all of my favorite Westerns have every last one of these ingredients, but those that do not are so outstanding in most ways that their flaws are overwhelmed.

Although *The Vanishing American*, a silent movie released in 1925, gave many Americans their first glimpse of Monument Valley, a natural wonder on the border of Utah and Arizona, it was *Stagecoach* and John Ford's many other Westerns that made it famous. Ironically, a minor but surprising flaw in *Stagecoach* is an abrupt and impossible change of scenery when John Wayne, as the Ringo Kid, suddenly appears standing in the path of the stage, twirling his rifle. Behind him is Monument Valley. In front of him is the stage, incongruously framed by the chaparral and rocks of California's coastal hills. Less jarring is the Indian attack on the stage while it crosses a dry lake bed not in Monument Valley but in the California desert. But these are minor objections to a masterpiece. As soon as the film begins to roll and the music plays, no matter how many times I have seen *Stagecoach*, goose pimples ripple up and down my spine. I'm looking at the Lordsburg stage rolling down an endless track of dirt in Monument Valley—these are the wide-open spaces I long for—and listening to lyrical chords that put me in the Old West. In seconds, I forget I'm watching a movie. It's a grand adventure, and I'm part of it.

Dialogue is sparse and crisp. The telegrapher hands a message hot off the wire to an Army officer. He reads it and says only, "Geronimo." The grim expressions on the faces of others in the telegrapher's office tell us all we need to know. John Ford thought the camera should tell the story. (If only other directors understood this.) Ford also wanted his characters to look the part. Whenever he could, he simply hired real teamsters and cowboys and real Indians to appear in his movies. As the stage rolls into town in one of the movie's first scenes, the camera focuses on three cowpokes moseying down the wooden sidewalk. They are rail thin, taut skinned, sunburned, leathery, bow legged, and half limping—and they came off an Arizona ranch. I feel like I'm looking at an old sepia-tone photo from 1880. The Indians in the movie are Indians, although Navajo and not Apache as portrayed. Ford employed Navajo in his movies again and again. They named him Natani Nez, the Tall Leader, and made him an honorary chief. The most prominent promontory in Monument Valley is called John Ford's Point.

Though not Plains Indians, the Navajo were good horsemen. Nonetheless, the trick riding and falls from horseback in *Stagecoach* are performed by white stuntmen in Indian costume—most notably, "Yakima" Canutt. Because of his nickname, Enos Edward Canutt was thought by some to be part Indian. Actually, he was German and Irish, and born and reared in the Yakima River country of Washington. He is seen throughout *Stagecoach* and performs the most spectacular stunt in the movie when he leaps from his paint war pony onto the six-horse team pulling the stage. Real Indians would never have done this—they would have shot the horses, bringing the chase to a quick end—but the stunt set the standard for the industry. Canutt also plays the buckskin-clad cavalry scout who gallops into view in the movie's first scene with Winchester held high in his right hand. A frozen frame of the scene would look like a Frederick Remington or Charles Russell painting. It is not coincidental. Ford was a fan of both artists and framed many of his shots to look like their paintings.

Throughout *Stagecoach*, America's folk melodies ebb and flow, most prominently the melody commonly associated with "Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie," although several other songs have been put to the same music. Other melodies we hear are associated with the songs "Joe Bowers," "Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair," "Lilly Dale," "Gentle Annie," and "Rosa Lee." They are melodies that we, as Americans, hold in our hearts—or at least did until the last quarter of a century or so. They are our tradition and express our soul. Music in *Stagecoach* introduces, accents, and even carries scenes. For long periods, the passengers on the stage sit silently, the music explaining all. All the human emotions are expressed in the notes and chords of the movie's score, which won an Academy Award. "For John Ford, there was no need for dialogue," said Jimmy Stewart. "The music said it all." Stewart was exaggerating, of course, but no director has ever used music so effectively as did Ford. The great director himself said that he would "rather have good music than bad dialogue." Perhaps music has a more powerful effect on me than it does on most, but my spirits rise and fall, turn light and dark, and I feel uplifted, vengeful, loving, or melancholy as melodies and tempos change.

The characters in *Stagecoach*, whether male or female, with a few exceptions, teach us how to behave. The men are flawed but ultimately strong; so, too, are the women.

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Louise Platt is the proper and pregnant wife of a cavalry officer. She appears at first as a pampered Southern belle unable to see beyond artificial class distinctions but evolves, grows, and gains strength scene by scene. Claire Trevor is the shopworn prostitute with the heart of gold, but also with the courage to face adversity and death. I have heard actresses in Hollywood and professors in academe in recent times proclaim that there were no roles for strong women in the old movies. Are these people entirely ignorant or so warped by political correctness that they are blind? Every Western is full of strong women—and that is the way it was in reality on the frontier.

As the corrupt banker, Berton Churchill shows us how not to behave. Not only does he abscond with depositors' money, but he is more concerned with his own escape than with the safety of the women, an unforgivable sin on the frontier. Donald Meek, as the meek and mild liquor drummer, initially seems not much better. He is easily bullied and appears frightened by his own shadow. Later, though, he is one of those who makes protection of the women paramount. Likewise, Thomas Mitchell, as an alcoholic doctor, and John Carradine, as a professional gambler, rise to the occasion to perform heroically. As the voluble and bumpkin-like stage driver, Andy Divine serves as comic relief but, in the face of an Apache attack, he drives like Jehu until wounded. We have no doubt how George Bancroft, as the U.S. marshal, and John Wayne, as the Ringo Kid, will perform. For the time being, they are on opposite sides of the law, but both clearly live by the Code of the West: Their word is their bond; they pay great deference to women; and they prefer death to dishonor—or, as a Texas cowboy put it, "I'll die before I'll run."

The travelers on the stage reflect the character of the people who led the American charge across the continent. A few who ventured onto the frontier were found wanting, but most set examples to inspire the rest of us. Once upon a time, we were expected to live up to their examples. This was long before the emasculated and effeminized man was celebrated by Hollywood.

Strong men and women, John Wayne, Monument Valley, and powerful, poignant music are again on display in *The Searchers*, released in 1956. Advances in technology and a big budget allowed John Ford to film in VistaVision, which produced the most brilliant colors and greatest clarity I had seen on the silver screen. As the credits roll, the Sons of the Pioneers sing "What Makes a Man to Wander," with a melody that is beautifully melancholy. In the first scene, we watch from behind as Dorothy Jordan opens a cabin door to the strains of "Lorena." A poignant ballad with a haunting melody that became popular during the Civil War, especially among soldiers—particularly Confederates—"Lorena" helps establish the character seen in the distance riding toward the cabin. His gray coat tells us the rest. He is John Wayne as Ethan Edwards, a Confederate Civil War veteran who hasn't seen his brother, Aaron, in many years.

As Ethan begins to come into focus, Dorothy Jordan's expression suggests that he is the brother she really loved. Aaron steps out of the cabin and stands next to his wife. Their children follow as if coming down the aisle of a church and moving laterally into pews. Ethan reaches the cabin and dismounts. The brothers look at each other and pause, their faces frozen, and then shake hands. Nothing more. They are men hardened by the Civil War and life on the frontier. No modern Hollywood hysteria. They turn and step toward the cabin door. Dorothy Jordan backs through the doorway, her eyes never off Ethan. All doubt about her true love vanishes.

Their fights, discoveries, tragedies, adventures, and conquests would rival anything the ancient Greeks could offer. It is not surprising that Westerns became a staple of movie production during the silent era—we were watching ourselves conquer a continent and build a new civilization. There was something else, though. We were returning to a raw wilderness that excited the senses for the very reason that it had not yet been conquered. It was threatening and dangerous—and it was wide open for those with grit, perseverance, and spirit.

John Ford has done it again. I am transported in seconds to the Texas frontier during the late 1860's, and I'm participating in an epic drama. As in *Stagecoach*, music drives much of the movie and helps tell the story. The Indian enemy this time is the Comanche. They are played by Ford's beloved Navajo. Modern viewers with their politically correct but wildly mistaken impressions of Indians might not appreciate Ford's great affection for the American Indian. Ford understood the constant intertribal warfare and the rape, scalping, torture, slaughter, kidnapping, and slavery that was part of it—and that, when the white tribe came along, it was subjected to the same. Ford also understood that the Indian ultimately found himself overwhelmed by the far more powerful and technologically advanced white tribe, although the power of the new tribe was not so readily apparent upon initial contact on the frontier, where the Indian saw only small groups of whites. By Ford's time, the Indian had been beaten and broken and reduced to living on reservations. With some notable exceptions, poverty and alcoholism were the norms. Ford could not help but compare the dispossession of the Indian to that of his own ancestors in Ireland.

In *The Searchers*, Ford does not shy away from the unspeakable savagery of the Comanche, although the camera never actually shows mutilated and dismembered corpses.

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Hollywood codes would not have allowed it. Even today, though, I suspect Ford would have left such carnage to our imagination, which may be more powerful. At the same time, Ford makes it clear that the Comanche were fighting the white tribe for what they considered theirs—what they took from other Indians—and they aimed to terrify and kill all challengers. That was simply as it always had been. Accommodation was only for the weak. Ford makes the chief of the Comanche band that Ethan is tracking an equal to the Duke. Chief Scar is played by 6'5" powerful and handsome Henry Brandon. The German-born actor was anything but Indian, but with a wig of long black hair and war paint, he looks big, mean, and impressive. White stuntmen, as usual, also don Indian costumes and perform all the trick riding and stunts. At 60 years old, Yakima Canutt was too old and bruised for spectacular falls from horseback and was doing more stunt coordinating than stunts. In *The Searchers*, the best of the stunts are performed by Frank McGrath, although, at 52, he was no kid himself and had only recently got out of a body cast after breaking his back while performing a stunt. These great old cowboy stuntmen would have been right at home on the Long Drive to the Kansas cow towns, displaying the reckless bravado, irrepressible spirit, and presence of mind in the face of danger that endeared the cowboys of the 19th century to Americans.

Some argue that, in *The Searchers*, John Wayne shows his dark side for the first time in his career. They obviously have not seen *Red River*, released eight years earlier. Ethan Edwards does have his demons. He is a Civil War veteran and a frontiersman who has fought Comanche all his life and witnessed their savagery up close and personal like. Ethan is not a gentle man, and neither were the real men who won the West. He is on a mission, an Homeric odyssey that takes years and covers thousands of miles, to find his niece, Debbie, kidnapped by the Comanche, and avenge the horrific deaths of her family. If she has gone mad from Comanche abuse and rape—as portrayed by two other captives in the movie—or, after years of captivity, beginning when she was a little girl, she has become Comanche, it is suggested that he might kill her. His young sidekick on the mission is Debbie's cousin, Martin Pawley, played by Jeffrey Hunter. Pawley is one-eighth Cherokee, and that one drop of blood bothers Ethan. Nonetheless, Ethan takes him under his wing, playing the role of a curmudgeonly mentor, a relationship that could be compared with the real-life relationship between director John Ford and actor John Wayne. Driven by whatever demons, Ethan is fiercely loyal to his kinfolk and to his tribe.

One of the great themes running throughout *The Searchers* is a paradox that has perplexed Americans since the colonial era. The movie ends with Ethan's reunified extended family stepping into a ranch house. Ethan does not follow. Men like him who led the way West could not accept the civilization that came along behind. Daniel Boone saw the smoke from a neighbor's cabin and left Old Kaintuck for Missouri. David Crockett was gone to Texas for a fresh start. Jim Bridger could not stand to go "down below" from his beloved Rocky Mountains.

While *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers* top my list, they have competition. *The Westerner* (1940) has simply brilliant interplay between Walter Brennan, as Judge Roy Bean, and Gary Cooper, as a cowboy mistaken for a horse thief. *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941) stars Errol Flynn at his best and portrays George Custer in a manner that would have elated his wife, Libby. Music drives the movie throughout, and nobody ever looked better than Flynn on a horse. *Red River* (1948) is the best portrayal of a cattle drive on the silver screen, and the Duke leads this one, becoming maniacal and homicidal along the way. *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), and *Rio Grande* (1950) make up John Ford's cavalry trilogy, although the combination of movies was pure happenstance. Together, they are the greatest tribute to the U.S. Cavalry in cinematic history. They each have their many strengths and a few flaws. My wife favors *Rio Grande* because of Maureen O'Hara's strong performance and her relationship with Wayne. *Rio Grande* also has the best music, including performances by the Sons of the Pioneers as regimental singers. Despite its portrayal of townsfolk acting like frightened sheep, *High Noon* (1952) features Gary Cooper at his best and Grace Kelly at her most beautiful. Katy Jurado telling Lloyd Bridges' character, Harvey Pell, that "It takes more than big broad shoulders to make a man" might be one of the best-delivered lines ever in movies.

The Big Country (1958) has perhaps the best single scene ever shot that says everything about men and loyalty in the Old West. Watch the confrontation between Charles Bickford and Charlton Heston at the entrance to Blanco Canyon. It is arguably the best performance in Heston's career, and one of the most moving sequences ever put on film. Directed by and starring Marlon Brando, *One-Eyed Jacks* (1961) almost went unnoticed when it was released. I don't understand why. It knocked me out then, and it knocks me out today. If you can accept Steve McQueen, with his blond hair and watery blue eyes, playing a half-breed, then *Nevada Smith* (1966) will keep you glued to the screen. His performance is classic McQueen, and others, including Brian Keith and Karl Malden, could not be better. Completing my baker's dozen is *Paint Your Wagon* (1969). Despite being a musical, it is absolutely the best depiction of mining-camp life ever put on the screen. This is Mark Twain and Bret Harte, part fun romp and part melancholy journey. Clint Eastwood can't sing, but he is perfect in his role, and Lee Marvin is brilliant.

These Westerns—and others—offer a dramatic interpretation of our American West during its wild and woolly era. They are not meant to be documentaries, but they certainly capture the essence of the frontier experience, an experience that turned Europeans into Americans and left us with a tradition we can embrace with pride. ◁

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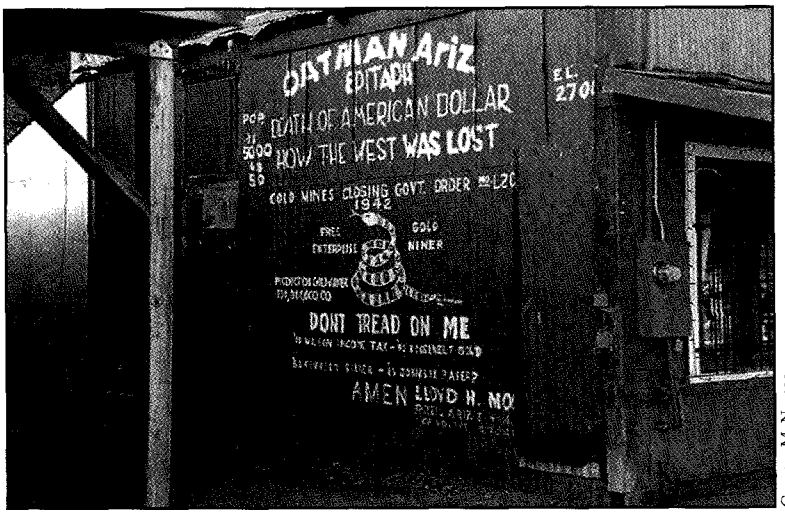
The Death of the Western

Back-Trailing for Affirmation

by Clay Reynolds



Gregory McNamee

Westerns have never enjoyed much of a highbrow audience or much literary distinction. Many people tend to sneer at the traditional form, because it seems to represent something obvious and a little dumb. As one of my students responded to my discussion of western historical fiction as a viable and valuable category of popular culture, "How do you account for the success of such truly stupid and old television programs as *Bonanza*, *The Rifleman*, and *The Lone Ranger*?" I told him that he had to consider several points before judging such programming. For example, *The Lone Ranger* was adapted from a radio serial. So were *Gunsmoke*, *Wagon Train*, and others. As radio programs, these were initially created (or adapted from other media, such as comic books and comic strips) as popular parallels to the Western films of the 30's and 40's, particularly the early work of John Ford, William Wyler, Howard Hawks, and others. Such popular representations of the West were predicated less on authenticity and historical accuracy than on the legendary derring-do of famous historical figures as they played out against the picturesque landscape of the frontier. A Western offered early filmmakers plenty of action with lots of moving figures at a very small budget; additionally, there were blazing firearms and colorful costuming, much of which was easily found, since much of the West was still a frontier when the motion picture was young. When heroes and villains of lore and legend had been sufficiently "done," fictional counterparts such as Red Rider and Marshal Matt Dillon were created to fill the gap. The West, after all, was a big and amorphous place; there was always room for invention.

Television was in its developmental stages when films made the transition to the smaller visual medium. Trite and naive programming was more often the rule than the exception. Restrictions on what could be depicted also were severe, so almost everything appeared with a veneer that concealed any objectionable material; but at that time, Americans were not ready for a realistic depiction of the West (or anything else) to be broadcast into their living rooms.

Nor were they seeking much authenticity in motion pictures. Attempts at more sophisticated cinema were not always well received. *High Noon* and *Shane* were both castigated for being too violent and for failing to uphold the moral values and wholesome images audiences associated with American ideals. Even such a relatively benign Western as *Destry Rides Again* (1939) was singled out for criticism by the Hays Office, since it seemed to promote the idea that a hero might succumb to the charms of an unscrupulous and blatantly immoral *femme fatale*.

In the decades between the world wars, Americans were increasingly fearful—of communism, of fascism, of the Depression. The era saw an enthusiastic resurgence in evangelical religion, indicating Americans' need to locate spiritual solace. There was, as well, a national need to bolster a faith in American "ideals," a kind of cultural back-trailing to a time that provided a moral foundation

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as an inspiration for hope. Stodgy philosophes such as the Founding Fathers in their powdered wigs and short breeches seemed too remote and long-winded to provide the needed iconography. But a taciturn frontiersman, gun-toting cowboy, or buckskin-clad Indian fighter—these were images Americans could get behind.

The true frontier and its denizens, taken wholesale, were not quite so romantic and heroic or particularly inspiring. As a result, writers began to construe the West in ways that seemed to respond to a public need. This was nothing new. In the late 18th century, when the British Empire first began to show signs of eroding, Sir Walter Scott's novels and poems about heroes of the past captured the imagination, although they had little to do with the established facts of British history. So, to some extent, did Jane Austen and Samuel Richardson. In the antebellum United States, what Nathaniel Hawthorne called "that damned mob of scribbling women" were penning romances by the reams to do the same thing in the face of a rapidly developing crisis that would ultimately bathe the entire nation in blood.

Too often, Western writers forget that the people of the American West who offer the models of the characters they want to create were mostly concerned with their own moment and had no idea of what was to come. They were stunned by invention and progress, just as we are today, but they were not sitting around waiting for the 20th century to show up and transform them into men with more modern sensibilities.

For a long time in the 20th century, then, it was natural for legend to outweigh attempts to present the West in a factual, accurate way. Certainly, there was much to recall with pride: the Erie Canal, the Transcontinental Railroad, the opening of the frontier to homestead settlement, the expansion of American-owned soil from coast to coast. And there was plenty of action and adventure: intrepid pioneers, ranching empires, gold rushes, boom towns, ferocious animals and hostile Indians galore. But looking at the novels of the West produced from the 20's forward, it is hard to find more than a handful that do not present almost laughable scenes of naive behavior and preachy passages affirming the virtually divine rights of (mostly white male) Americans to be where they are and to do what they did, no matter who got hurt in the bargain. In many of these renditions, vestiges of reality still emerged: Indians were heathen savages; Chinese were cheap and disposable labor; Negroes were awkward and painful reminders of a bloody war; Mexicans were displaced and childlike peons or vicious *pistoleros*; outlaws were unconscionable brigands; women were to be venerated or desired; wild animals were to be exterminated out of necessity, if not profit.

Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, were upright and honest; preachers and priests were gentle and wise; mountain men were amusingly rustic and astonishingly witty; ranchers' daughters and saloon girls were uniformly lovely and virginal; cowboys were sweet and shy; lawmen were chisel-jawed, chaste, and almost always Caucasian. They also wore white hats, carried nickel-plated revolvers that fired silver bullets, and were adept at shooting guns out of bad guys' hands in ways that seldom or never drew blood. Chicanery, exploitation, corruption, greed, mountebankery, perfidy, calumny, fanaticism, bigotry, humbug, fraud, extortion, and outright murder and theft—to say nothing of rape and pillage—were the province of villains who could be quickly subdued, mostly by shooting the guns out of their hands or sternly advising them to vacate the territory. Vigilantes were misguided and overanxious citizens, never drunk and irrational mobs. Lynchings, draggings, and whippings were all off stage, and no one but road agents and cattle thieves ever failed to shave closely each and every day.

America's love affair with the West was not born in this era, by any means. James Fenimore Cooper's novels presented a wild frontier and a protagonist who became the model for countless American heroes of novel and film. Honest, insightful, schooled in woodcraft, tolerant, and compassionate, Natty Bumppo represents the prototypical icon of "truth, justice, and the American way," although, for the most part, he is British. That he winds up his life disillusioned and lost on the empty plains of a nascent nation's frontier is irrelevant. David Crockett, hero of stage and printed pamphlet, was extolled as a latter-day Daniel Boone, intrepidly traveling to Texas to fight for freedom and independence. That he was a failed politician who abandoned his wife and family and may have been summarily executed after falling more or less accidentally into a death trap also does not mitigate.

The iconic image of the West was born when the West was still young. Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill proved that during the last 20 years of the 19th century, while the frontier was in the process of closing; their traveling shows were just two of hundreds of Wild West spectacles that made the West "real" for millions who had never seen a living buffalo, grizzly bear, or red Indian and still regarded everything west of the Mississippi as the "Great American Desert." In a sense, early writers and impresarios "formulated" the American West, gave it dimension by presenting a version that would endure for a hundred years.

Even so, the image of the West was refined in the 20th century; it became better organized, cleaner, and more selective in how it presented itself. No one wanted to think of the millions of immigrants who died miserably in mines and along railroad beds, who faced gross discrimination in employment and housing for nearly a century. No one wanted to think about broken treaties, disregard-

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ed promises, about the Trail of Tears or the Long Walk or Wounded Knee or the starvation and hopeless deprivation on reservations that existed and continues to exist throughout the West.

Instead, new heroes were discovered—or, in some cases, rediscovered—in what today would be regarded as unlikely guises. James Butler Hickok, a myopic fop and stone killer, was elevated from dissipated gambler and chronically unemployed hired gun, a drunk, probably dying from gonorrhea, who never had a sidekick named "Jingles" but was playing cards with utter lowlifes when he was murdered in a seedy mining camp's gin mill, to the status of knight errant, riding hither and thither, handsomely dispensing frontier justice with his pearl-handled six-guns. Wyatt Earp, a ruthless opportunist, land speculator, saloon owner, political hack, sometimes pimp and notorious philanderer, provocateur and accessory to manslaughter, was raised to the status of law-and-order champion. Billy the Kid was altered from psychopathic juvenile delinquent and hired killer to a sweet, misunderstood youth, shot down by a jealous rival after an unsuccessful bid for amnesty and the almost casual murder of an abusive jailer. Jesse James evolved from a cold-blooded killer who left a path of gore across Missouri and Kansas when he rode with Bloody Bill Anderson into the family-values-centered Mr. Howard, gunned down from behind by a "dirty little coward," who himself was a pimp and opium peddler. Curiously, no one wanted to consider how Bat Masterson, buffalo killer, saloon owner, gambler, and pimp, could wind up a respectable sportswriter in New York City. Sins of the flesh are supposed to be atoned for, after all. When that didn't happen, the best plan was to ignore them and replace them with virtues.

Others were revived from dusty demises and rehabilitated. Early explorers and mountain men became the apotheoses of bold adventurers, when some had simply abandoned family and responsibilities because they were unable to function within a structured society. Most Americans today would find such men to be unsavory, obnoxious, and even dangerous individuals with dispositions ranging from the impetuous to the insane. The lifestyles that brought them to drug addiction or alcoholism or venereal disease, and often to bloody ends, hardly reflected the ideals of a later time, so their histories were modified, abridged, even sanctified as models for modern behavior.

Melodramas, penny dreadfuls, magazine serials, and dime novels started the trend long before the 19th century ended and the frontier closed; but when the 20's and 30's brought far more dismal prospects to the country than it had ever seen before, and World War II confronted the entire globe with an unimaginable number of dead and the very real prospect of literal world destruction, the natural trend was to look to legendary precedent as a foundation of national values. It is no accident that the National Anthem, the Pledge of Allegiance, and other national icons were formalized in this same period, that our contemporary notions of patriotism were codified and ingrained in children almost from the time they could walk and talk.

The sad fact, though, is that there are no such things as "national values." We share several, maybe many, national notions, but values are as various as we are as a people. Moreover, few if any of the real men behind the legends celebrated in Westerns would have practiced or embraced anything like what we claim to be "our values"—indeed, many would be appalled by them, see them as symptoms of weakness, if not stupidity; but for almost a century, we simply ignored that and pretended that they would give us their blessing and see us as the natural heirs to their higher ambitions.

When the Western is discussed as a literary endeavor, people tend to bring up Owen Wister and Zane Grey as the bedrock writers of the category whose works seem to underscore our need for value-affirmation, but no one really reads them. If they did, they would have to face the brutal homicides that form their stories' climaxes and to recognize that, even though these works lack the kind of verisimilitude that might elevate them to a level of sophistication, they actually are dealing with a West that is hardly the fountainhead of goodness or a model for society. Myth dies hard, especially when it contradicts reality. Extrapolations and embellishments are required to make the archetype useful to a modern sensibility. As John Ford pointed out years ago, where legend is concerned, facts have little cachet.

The bicentennial celebration of the mid-70's was bolstered in no small part by a kind of revived Emersonianism, translated (or perhaps twisted) and disseminated by the "Great Communicator" (sometimes depicted in his white hat, astride his white horse), whose vision of American goodness and the quality of past values informed our culture well into the 80's. The Western enjoyed a brief resurgence of popularity, highlighted by Larry McMurtry winning the Pulitzer Prize. It fostered a whole new romanticism, as well, particularly in such films as *Unforgiven* and *Dances With Wolves*, idealistic and improbably plotted stories that provided an intoxicating, heady tonic to cure the suspicion that things were not so well with us as we wished them to be.

In the cold gray light of resumed reality, however, the hangover came quick, and it continues. Americans no longer want naive recreations that push well-polished legends, even those created from the whole cloth of writers' imaginations, ahead of grittier accuracy. Just as children have traded backyard games of "cowboys and Indians" for video games with graphic depictions of violence, readers have drifted away from sanitized recreations of innocent heroines and handsome heroes.

Over the years, some writers have sensed this and responded with a more graphic display of the American West, warts and all. From Walter Van Tilburg Clark's indictment of frontier justice, to E.L. Doctorow's depiction

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of hopelessness in the face of utter evil, to Elmore Leonard's graphic illustration of racial intolerance, to Gregg Matthew's gruesome stories of frontier depravity, to Cormac McCarthy's grisly portrait of a wilderness prowled by homicidal maniacs, to Thomas Berger's comic but somehow telling suggestion that the frontier was a nasty and uncertain place, a different vision of the American West has been revealed in books that have reached for and sometimes attained literary acclaim. But such works have had little impact on the public perception of the frontier period as a kind of American Camelot, populated by knights-errant in boots and chaps, riding aimlessly about to ensure that justice and goodness will always triumph.

Not only were the real men and women of the Old West just as far from perfect as we are, but they also back-trailed, seeking analogues for their own actions, their own worthiness and goodness in the icons and heroes of their own history, their own past. It was their era that dubbed George Washington "the father of his country," rather than "Burner of Villages," as Indian lore described him. Hence, the difference between Wister's Virginian and Cooper's Leatherstocking is more a matter of presentation than personality, just as the difference between John Wayne and David Crockett is more a matter of what we demand to be true than what the truth might actually be. When examined closely, John Wayne and David Crockett had much in common. Both were inveterate actors, playing it large and to the back row, ignoring who they truly were in favor of the image they too often came to believe in as genuine.

What happened to the American Western, then, is that nothing happened to it. It is still there, and it is still doing what it has always done. But we, as a culture, have changed. There were good people in the West, to be sure, probably more good people than bad. But in a post-Watergate, post-Vietnam, post-September 11 world, we have come to understand that the good guys do not always win, and that sometimes, the enemies they go out to do battle against are elusive and hard to define. Sometimes, when it is found, "evil" is not even evil at all; sometimes, the "good" isn't that much better. And sometimes, as Pogo reminded us years ago, our main enemy, when met, may be uncomfortably familiar—may, in fact, be ourselves.

The Lone Ranger and the Cartwrights belong to an older, simpler era, and the vision of the West at that juncture was better scrubbed. No one stank, carried vermin, had diseases, or harbored dark and scary secrets. No one drank too much, smoked opium or marijuana, or availed themselves of cankered prostitutes and grimy gambling dens. Everyone had clear skin and white teeth; everyone had perfect eyesight and excellent taste; everyone was well groomed and well educated. No one ever broke a sweat, died in childbirth, or fell off a horse, and everybody wore six-guns in the house and dressed up for church, which they naturally attended every Sunday. Everyone in the right was wholesome and positive. Only outlaws looked scruffy and were as obnoxious and ugly as they were ill mannered and ungrammatical. Hotel rooms and saloons were clean, capacious, well-lighted places; meals were nutritious, delicious, and always served on white linen with no fear of E. coli or trichinosis; and no one at the table ever uttered a racial slur or vile profanity, or spoke a discouraging word.

The West, of course, was not like that. For that matter, neither was the East. A quick glance at a volume such as *The Gangs of New York* confirms that the difference between Tombstone and Manhattan in the same era had more to do with the alternate fashions of wearing firearms than with much of anything else. The West of the American imagination, though, was not located in the gritty streets of Gotham. It was, instead, a wonderland created in a time when wonders were needed to sustain hopes and dreams. Today, we have a different vision of our world. It is not necessarily a better vision, but it is more honest. While there are lots of stories of honesty, integrity, goodness, and heroics in the West, they require balance and a candid depiction against a backdrop that carries the sensations of a frontier where desperation and fear were often daily companions, and where concerns about upholding values were of a lower priority than merely surviving for one more day.

Too often, Western writers forget that the people of the American West who offer the models of the characters they want to create were mostly concerned with their own moment and had no idea of what was to come. They were stunned by invention and progress, just as we are today, but they were not sitting around waiting for the 20th century to show up and transform them into men with more modern sensibilities. Indeed, they thought that they *were* modern and sensible. The future was a hazy thought, seldom studied. They believed firmly that the way things were, more or less, was the way they always would be, with only slight modification, and that pretty much they were about as good as people would ever become. Their attitudes, prejudices, biases, and beliefs were not temporary adoptions they knew were incorrect and that they would cast aside when they became enlightened. They believed they already were enlightened and that their civilization was probably about as advanced as human beings were capable of making it. There was room for improvement, naturally, but not for dynamic change. Vision, in sum, was concept, not fact waiting to be revealed. Most of them, if brought to our time, would be shocked, even repulsed by our social and political attitudes, by our hand-wringing over social inequality and guilt for overt measures taken in the name of economic or political expediency, by our attention to sensitivity and justice, just as we are often shocked and repulsed by their apparent ignorance of our heightened humanitarianism. But it is not proper to try to change them, in our fictions, to make them more sensitive or prescient or somehow alert to our vision of the backwardness of their time and place. We can only accept them as they were and, by depicting them faithfully, hope to learn from their behavior.

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The View Past Sixty

by John Freeman

November. Beyond my fence, hissing winds from the north
swirl trembling branches and broomstraw.
This yard, these woods and fields I've listened to for years,
searching out their hidden voices,
learning their idioms—
more and more they seem to lose interest
in our encounters. Have I become irrelevant?

What is it they no longer tell me,
these frogs in my ditch belching their vulgar mantras,
the wind rattling willow leaves like my catarrhs?
Something I know but can't remember,
a ripple in the alluvia of my veins
grown sluggish with the cyclical washings of the waters.

I walk to the end of my porch
where the western sky, beyond the wooden fence
and the distant trees, grows pale so early.
Across the cloudless emptiness a vapor trail
takes on a silver tint, the glowing scales
of a white perch running upstream.
In the wind's rising susurrance, the first twisting
maple leaves drop on the yard, arched like wings of geese
descending down into darkening corners of strange lakes.

Visiting My Great-Uncle in the Nursing Home

by John Freeman

Though I have not seen you for several years,
after *hello* we descend into silence
like cornfields under a falling snow,
a silence too dark for me to speak into
for fear that nothing will answer. The only thing
that seems solid is this chair whose arms I grip.

Yours is not the forgetful tongue
of old age, but a lifelong commitment.
What reserve did the western Iowa wind
burn into your skin as a boy
that it welded your lips shut? Blood-brother
to silence stubborn as bluffs by a river,
words break from you grudgingly, fragment by fragment,
from rock that yields slowly to erosion.

Our voices absent, isolated sounds
magnify: a passing car,
groans from the next room, the clock ticking.
Uncle Lee, before your stone tongue
dissolves, let go of your words.

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by Taki Theodoracopulos

Taking the Mickey

In an English court of law 21 years ago, I had the opportunity to discover first-hand how touchy judges can be when challenged from the dock. It was a case of libel that caught both the tabloid and broadsheet imagination, not to mention the BBC's. I had referred to a very rich old woman as an adventuress, basically a high-class tart, and she had sued the *Spectator* and yours truly. We had a lot of fun in court, but, as it turned out, it was very expensive fun. I had decided to go half and half with the then-proprietor of the most elegantly written and oldest weekly of the English-speaking world.

When I stood to be cross-examined by a barrister who must have been a student of the great Stalin purges of the 30's, there was a hush in the court. I had been warned beforehand not to take the mickey, as they say in Blighty. In other words, play dumb, and no wise cracks. To make his point stick, my own barrister reminded me of the great Lord Birkenhead's case, who was giving evidence in a libel trial and had said that the plaintiff was as drunk as a judge. "You mean drunk as a lord," spluttered the judge.

"Yes, my lord," answered Birkenhead. His side lost.

My counsel also warned me about the infamous Oscar Wilde case. "Do you deny having champagne with so and so on the tenth of June, Mr. Wilde?"

"No, I do not deny it, despite my doctor's orders," answered Oscar.

"Never mind your doctor's orders," cried the bench.

"I never do . . ." We all know how that one turned out.

Two weeks before my case, a friend of mine had been through yet another libel case, and the presiding judge decided he would announce the result after the lunch break. High-court judges in Britain are known for their dislike of the Fourth Estate, in general, and gossipy hacks, in particular. My friend went to lunch at the George, an old-fashioned inn where hundreds of plaintiffs and defendants have congregated throughout the centuries. Like the journalist that he is, he got thoroughly sloshed and returned to Court 13 feeling no pain. "Innocent," pronounced his lordship, obviously not best pleased with the jury's decision.

"Hooray!" cried my friend.

"One day in the cells for contempt of court," replied the judge.

"Why don't you give me two, you bewigged buffoon!" said the hack.

"Have it as you wish," came the judge. "Two weeks for further contempt." The defendant then was escorted out of the court and taken to the cells below to begin his sentence. Mind you, cooler heads prevailed, and after a groveling apology, the hack was let out after 48 hours.

Lord Justice Otton—no longer with us, thank God, as is the case for the plaintiff also—had a fearsome reputation and was known to pride himself on his command of the English language. "What does *Taki* stand for?" was his first question as I was sworn in.

"Little virgin Mary," said poor little me to loud guffaws from the peanut gallery. (Taki is a diminutive for *Panagiotaki*, as in *Panagia*, the Holy Virgin.)

His lordship perked up. "I will remind the defendant that this is a court of law, open to all, be he or she ne'er so humble nor high." Although a *non-sequitur*, I let it slide. "And what does *Theodoracopulos* stand for?"

"Gift from God, your lordship." (Which it does.) More guffaws. If Otton was mildly against me at the start, he became virulently anti-Taki after that.

The whole case hung on the word *catamite*. *Catamite* is a bastardization of the name *Ganymede*, the most beautiful young man in Greek mythology, whom Zeus would impersonate when he ventured down from Olympus looking for action with the fairer sex. Hera, Zeus's wife, caught on, came down, and plucked Ganymede up Mount Olympus, making him a servant of the gods. *Catamite*, however, also means a bugger's minion. I had described the woman's husband as a catamite, because the man was a homosexual. When the plaintiff's barrister asked which of the two I had meant, I answered that I meant the former—a man serving drinks. "I suggest to you that you are a liar," said the plaintiff's mouthpiece.

"I suggest to you that you are a theomicrist," came back poor little Taki.

"What is a theomicrist?" demanded Judge Otton.

"A person who mocks God," said I. Even louder laughter in court.

It was all downhill after that. Later on, when I described the dumb but extremely rich woman who had sued as an aristophren, someone of superior intelligence—I was obviously taking the mickey—Lord Justice Otton fairly exploded. He threatened me with contempt of court, until I informed him what the word meant. "Surely you knew that, my Lord." Well, vengeance was his at the end. The way the judge summed up the case to a working-class jury surely must go down in the history of kangaroo courts. For a moment, I feared for my eleutheromanic nature. The jury took over a whole day to reach a verdict and, by a majority of 11 to 1, awarded the plaintiff a large amount, and we also got to pay for the court costs—$400,000 of the time. When the press asked for a statement, I had this to say: "Could you find out the name of the German pilot who bombed the Temple [where all the lawyers are housed] in 1942? I would like to call my next son after him." ◈

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He Got Them First

by John Willson

"Traitors' words ne'er yet hurt honest cause."
—Scottish Proverb

Blacklisted by History: The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy and His Fight Against America's Enemies
by M. Stanton Evans
New York: Crown Forum; 663 pp., $29.95

Melanie Anderson

The destruction of Sen. Joe McCarthy, says M. Stanton Evans, was never about what he did:

> The real issue has always been the larger question of what happened to America—and the world—at the midpoint of the twentieth century, what it meant, and who was responsible for it. The point of the standard treatments . . . isn't merely that McCarthy was mistaken, but that the perspective he represented itself was evil and needs everywhere to be combated.

If Joe McCarthy's understanding of the world was evil, then everything he did was evil and justified whatever good men did to get rid of him.

Mr. Evans not only takes on the "real issue"; he grabs it by the throat. What happened to America, he insists, was that her New Deal crusade to save the world from the Axis menace put us in the arms of an even greater communist menace, the danger of which Democrats and liberals insufficiently understood. How could they understand, since they shared with the rest of the left what Walter Lippmann called "The Dominant Dogma of the Age"—that government has the capacity to make us happy?

Joe McCarthy, a Catholic poor-boy-made-good from Middle America, a guy most Americans instinctively rooted for (I remember my father saying, "He's doing the right thing"), called out our progressives on their ordering of the world in favor of what, by 1950 or so, was clearly the Other Side. He called them out hard, offended them, insulted them, and caused them to do worse things than those of which they accused him. "They got him," Mr. Evans says, "but it's equally true that, before this happened, he got them—or at least a sizable number of them." Therein lies the tale.

The conventional wisdom about McCarthy is that he ran over innocent people like a runaway train; that he was a "fraud and a hoax," in the words of Sen. Millard Tydings; that he inspired hate and fear, and injured countless lives by accusing innocent men and women of communist connections; that he knew little about the subjects he most passionately persecuted people for; that he played fast and loose with the constitutional rights of his enemies; and that he was brought down after demeaning the integrity of the very institutions he claimed to protect. He is the only senator ever to inspire a caption: *McCarthyism*, an Orwellian term used today by people who wish only to discredit their opponents, almost as generic as *fascist*, or, as hopeful neoconservatives want us to learn to say, *Islamofascist*. No American, not even Benedict Arnold or John Wilkes Booth, has been so utterly, as Mr. Evans says, "blacklisted by history."

Because Mr. Evans waited 50 years after McCarthy's censure by his Senate colleagues, he has had more access to FBI, National Archives, and other presidential and private sources than anyone before him who has written about his subject. He has not, however, produced a work of history or biography so much as a journalist's brief. Here is a master newspaperman at work: digging, interviewing the record, pulling apart and putting together the details of deeds done mostly by the politicians who ran our imperfect national government in the 1950's. He

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has little good to say about the journalists and historians who have written about McCarthy before; but then, his argument is not so much with them as it is with the "progressive history lesson," against which Mr. Evans has been contending his whole life. *Blacklisted by History*, in fact, should be construed as the single-case version of his big-picture work, *The Theme Is Freedom: Religion, Politics and the American Tradition*, among the best books of the postliberal era.

Evans' argument here comes down to this: Sen. Joe McCarthy was superior to his enemies. He was pugnacious, difficult, uncontrollable, imprudent. But

> His record needs to be set over against that of his opponents, from Tydings and the State Department to Joe Welch and Stevens-Adams. On that kind of balance sheet, it's plain that McCarthy was far more sinned against than sinning, and that on the central issues he was chiefly right and his opponents chiefly in error.

Commie studies have not gone well for their apologists and sympathizers for the past couple of decades. For a long time, they could say almost anything about McCarthy or anticommunists in general and still get it published in mainstream journals and respectable presses. The first is still true, but the second is starting to even up. The end of the Cold War, instead of vindicating the anti-anti-communist liberal internationalists, has undermined them—not that they have noticed. For a while, Venona, the Soviet archives, documents smuggled out of communist countries, the opening of too-long-closed American sources, and surprising honesty from members of the evil empire seemed likely to blow the conventional wisdom about American anticommunism to smithereens. As a friend said in 1995, "And here we thought there was a commie under every bed; come to find out, there was one under only every other bed. All the rest were working for the Federal Government."

Despite the efforts of historians John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, Allan Weinstein, Arthur Herman, and others; the decades-long determination of Herbert Romerstein and the late Ralph de Toledano to tell the truth; and the early efforts of Bill Buckley and Brent Bozell to put this all in perspective, the tales of witch-hunting go on and on. Communist Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, which lied about both the Puritans and the 50's, is still more celebrated than excommunist Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront*, which told the truth about what all thugs do. As recently as 2005, our popular culture could still allow George Clooney to portray the liar Edward R. Murrow as a hero, and the hero Joe McCarthy as a liar.

This is why Mr. Evans' book is so important. If he had approached me and other older conservatives in, say, 1998, and said that he was researching a book that would defend Senator McCarthy in all particulars, we probably would have said, "Let it go. The Cold War is over. The bad guys are on the run." But Evans was right to persevere. If the real issue is to be put to the refiner's fire, the hardest tests of that issue must be met head on. If Joe McCarthy was merely a runaway train, we must admit the fact. But if we let the Other Side get away with portraying him in a red suit and horns, carrying a pitchfork, the real issue remains open, as Clooney has shown. A new generation of historians is already trying to rehabilitate Harry Dexter White, Ted Hall, Laughlin Currie, and others as patriots in their own hearts, even though they without question spied for Stalin. There is still, almost beyond belief, a cottage industry (subsidized by New York University) trying to reestablish the innocence of Alger Hiss.

Mr. Evans proceeds from what he likes to call "the record." There is no speculation about McCarthy's psychological health (or, for that matter, that of his enemies), no convoluted Richard Rovere-like explanations about unhealthy ambitions or unhealthy friendships; not even much comment about his alcohol intake, which even the record suggests was indeed unhealthy. About motives, Mr. Evans confines himself to the conviction that "McCarthy cast the struggle starkly in religious terms—the confrontation of atheistic communism with the Christian civilization of the West." Such words may sound quaint today, but McCarthy was a serious, believing Catholic at a time when Bishop Fulton Sheen was just starting to make it respectable to be one. Rather, Mr. Evans asks, was McCarthy right or wrong on the facts and the merits of each case? How have his critics known that what they said about him was true? How can we know?

This is probably the soundest rhetorical strategy Evans could have chosen. In pursuit of answers to these deceptively simple questions, he leads his readers through the "data" that make up every significant episode of the McCarthy story from Wheeling, West Virginia, through his censure by his fellow senators. Because McCarthy knew more about communists in government and had better sources than

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most of his opponents, Mr. Evans' careful reconstruction of events puts him up, on the substance of things, about 90 percent of the time. The Tydings Committee, for example, was convened in early 1950 to investigate security matters in the State Department but, instead, in collusion with the State Department, investigated McCarthy. Mr. Evans shows that it was "false in virtually every aspect [of its findings], and where not conclusively so is sharply contrary to the available record." Senator Tydings was an unlikely attack dog, having been a thorn in FDR's side during the court-packing episode of 1937-38; but, by 1950, the stakes for Dean Acheson's State Department and Harry Truman's presidency were so high that they enlisted the entire party to cover up their failed security policies.

Millard Tydings failed to be reelected in 1952, becoming a McCarthy "victim" in part because of a widely circulated composite photograph of him with Earl Browder, the former Communist Party chief. It turns out that McCarthy had nothing to do with the doctored photograph. On the other hand, Tydings himself had appeared in the Senate with what he claimed was a phonograph record of McCarthy giving wild numbers pertaining to false communist lists in his Wheeling speech. Such a record never existed. Tydings lied, as he was later forced to admit under oath. Who practiced "McCarthyism"?

Mr. Evans exposes this sort of thing again and again. But to take on the toughest of the toughest, let us turn briefly to the two episodes that hurt McCarthy most in the eyes of the general public. The first is the case of Annie Lee Moss, the poor black woman who is often cast as the most pathetic of McCarthyism's martyrs. She worked for the General Accounting Office (1945-49), and thereafter for the Army as a code clerk until called before the McCarthy subcommittee on March 11, 1954. This summons was not out of the blue. She had been identified by good FBI sources, under oath, as a communist for several years. In front of the committee and television cameras, she played the victim: barely literate (yet a code clerk!), never heard of Marx, didn't know what a communist was, maybe it was a case of mistaken identity. There were, after all, three Annie Lee Mosses in the D.C. phone book. Except there weren't, as a young M. Stanton Evans checked out at the time as a cub reporter. They had the right woman, and she was a communist, and the Army had known about it for years. Nobody has written the true story of Annie Lee Moss until now. Her Emmy-worthy performance may never be explained. Two pieces of the backstory are also interesting to contemplate. McCarthy wasn't even present for most of her testimony. And the Supreme Court handed down *Brown* v. *Board of Education* barely two months later, which may have affected the context.

The second case is the Army-McCarthy hearings, which I, along with about 20 million other Americans, watched all that spring. Even as a 14-year-old, I knew that the emotional drama that was unfolding had little to do with facts, which, as Mr. Evans proves, went mostly in McCarthy's favor. It was about who could play the television medium better, a contest won hands-down by Army lawyer Joseph Welch, whose acting ability was later validated in the James Stewart movie *Anatomy of a Murder*. Most Americans, polls showed at the time, didn't know that the hearings originated in Army charges against McCarthy, not in his persecution of honorable officers. It is true that the dumbest thing McCarthy ever did was to attack George C. Marshall on the floor of the Senate on June 14, 1951. Almost without doubt, this action made up future President Eisenhower's mind about McCarthy. The one man who could bring McCarthy down decided that it should be done.

On the merits, even the Army-McCarthy hearings go McCarthy's way. In fact, Mr. Evans asserts, "It's a remarkable but generally neglected fact that every major McCarthy investigation in the period 1953-54 resulted in some significant change in governmental practice." Of course, his critics would say—because of McCarthyism. No, says the record: His investigations on balance improved the security mechanisms of the U.S. government, sent into obscurity many people who should have been sent into obscurity, and rarely were conducted with the lack of decorum that causes unwelcome collateral damage. Even the famous "Point of order!" was an unusual tactic. McCarthy wasn't easy to control, as Robert Taft often pointed out, but was, by many accounts, quite a likeable fellow. Why then, in the words of Arthur Herman, was he "America's Most Hated Senator"?

The answer, according to Mr. Evans, is not that he unduly or unnecessarily injured or terrorized people. Rather, he conjured the Asian demons the Democrats thought they had stuffed forever in a bottle. It has been a long time since any serious author has brought to the fore the Asian muddle of 1945-49 other than to dismiss it condescendingly as the product of "Asia-Firsters," who were, according to the accepted version, the last remnant of the old isolationists. Mr. Evans insists on the centrality of the *Amerasia* case, not only for its implications for national security, but for its negative prospects for Democratic politics. Failure to cap the *Amerasia* bottle, he says, would have resulted in the spilling of the whole Democratic geopolitical pot. The Democrats had capped the bottle, but then along came Joe, and at a very bad time.

China had become communist in 1949, an event that has been made to seem utterly inevitable in the accepted version. In fact, while the United States was taking extraordinary measures to protect Western Europe from Soviet threats that were perhaps overstated, the anticommunists in China were left high and dry. This was in no small part a result, as McCarthy understood, of advice fed into the Truman administration by traitors and fellow-travelers who portrayed Mao and Chou En-lai as "agrarian reformers." Had McCarthy succeeded in reopening the *Amerasia* case, the failure of our Asian Cold War policy would have been apparent even before the Korean War exposed the cost of Mao's victory.

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McCarthy's Wheeling speech was delivered on February 9, 1950. The Tydings committee hearings began on March 8 (remarkably soon, given that their subject was supposed to be an issue the State Department had already solved) and dragged on into June. On June 25, the army of North Korea crossed the 38th Parallel, and, within weeks, the United States was illegally, if understandably, at war. Despite the best attempts of Tydings, Dean Acheson, and the full power of the Truman administration, Korea made it impossible to silence Joe McCarthy. One wishes Mr. Evans had made this connection clearer.

That the United States messed up in Asia from about 1899 to at least 1975 is beyond reasonable dispute; that the years 1945-49 should have focused the moral and geopolitical issues there at least as clearly as they did in the West is perhaps asking too much of a nation that was then newly embarking upon empire. In retrospect, it isn't all that surprising that Senator McCarthy should have rubbed things raw by calling into question the loyalty and integrity of such men as John Stuart Service, John Paton Davies, John Carter Vincent, and Owen Lattimore, when so much effort had gone into their exoneration. The souls of the over 50,000 American men and women who died in Korea will cry out for a long time over Truman's, Marshall's, and Acheson's failure to comprehend what was happening in China in 1945. The stakes were indeed high.

Why Ike had to annihilate McCarthy (instead of simply ignoring him after Korea was settled) is a little harder to understand, even given, as Mr. Evans says, how many of his advisors detested the Wisconsin maverick. Sherman Adams, Ike's chief of staff (who himself was later sacrificed on charges of personal corruption), gave the lynching order in January 1954; there is little doubt of that. Perhaps those around the President were genuinely afraid of McCarthy. More likely—Mr. Evans does not speculate much about it—they, too, wanted the Far East question to go away. Vietnam would be left for other Democrats to mess up. And in the meantime, the Eisenhower White House (in order to cut McCarthy off from his sources) contributed greatly to the corruption of the doctrine of the separation of powers in claiming, and getting away with, excessive "executive privilege," a lesson ill learned by Vice President Richard Nixon.

Mr. Evans sums up by saying that "McCarthy, whatever his faults, was a good man and true—better and truer by far than the tag teams of cover-up artists and backstage plotters who connived unceasingly to destroy him." I have asked my younger colleagues what, if any, emotional stake they have in the whole McCarthy episode. "None," they reply. One of them says that he would have placed McCarthy very low on a list of topics that might be subject to revision. It is to M. Stanton Evans' everlasting credit that he thus surprises and enlightens the coming generation. Maybe he will also teach them how to give as good as one gets. ◁

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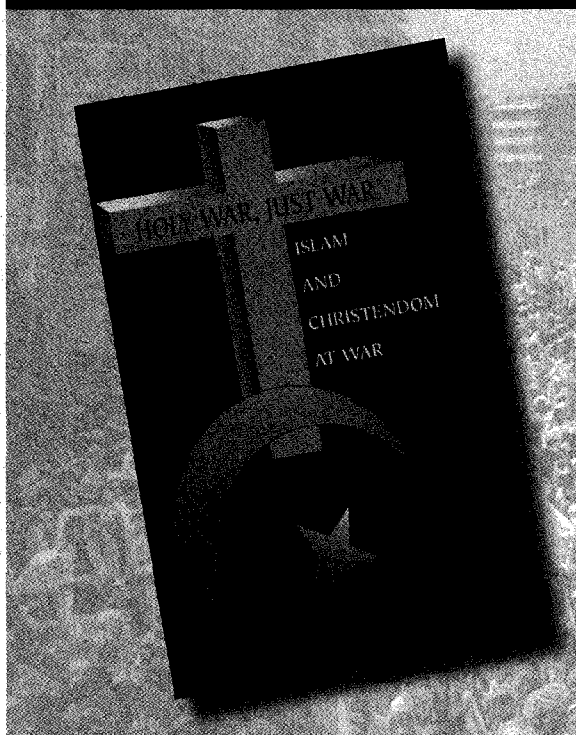

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Islam and Christendom at War

by Roberto de Mattei

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A Spy Thriller to the Wise

by Andrei Navrozov

Agent Zigzag: The True Wartime Story of Eddie Chapman: Lover, Traitor, Hero, Spy
by Ben Macintyre
New York: Bloomsbury; 372 pp., $25.95

It is almost inevitable that a reader of my interests and disposition should slightly miss the point of this book, described in a *Daily Express* blurb as "a good spy thriller," and that is precisely what I propose to do. Spy thrillers are plentiful; they are summer reading at its Sardinian beachiest. To review one head-on in this space is a little like coming to a Tennyson Society dinner in nothing but a bracelet of turquoise beads and a floppy panama.

Let me get the vulgar preliminaries out of the way of the intellect by seconding the view of the *Express* reviewer, a view apparently shared by others who know something of the genre. Thus, John le Carré, for instance, hails the book as "splendidly told, immensely entertaining and often very moving," while an unnamed source cited on the back cover merely as "MI5" has contributed a literary judgment to the effect that, "in fiction," the story of Eddie Chapman "would be rejected as improbable." In short, this thriller is thrilling.

More thrilling, in fact, than anybody with even the most roundabout concern for the survival of a free West in the present totalitarian era would find comfortable. The book is set at the dawn of that era, its historical context the concurrence of the intelligence services of Germany and Great Britain during the first, the more perilous, phase of World War II. Yet only a myopic jingoist inebriated with hindsight should judge that the present state of intelligence, whether in Britain or in her once and future ally the United States, is *a priori* a good match for its counterparts and adversaries elsewhere; and that the ongoing great game of MI6 or the CIA is more like the game played by Churchill than like a *Hogan's Heroes* episode that, as he rightly suspects, Hitler's spy network resembled.

This, in effect, is the chiller in the thriller. It has always suited the West's spywriters to exaggerate the shrewdness, the resourcefulness, and even the courage of their side's opponents, because when, after a sweaty three hours, a burly adult finally beats a six-year-old girl at chess, the news value of the event, to say nothing of the victor's skill, is thrown into doubt. By contrast, Ben Macintyre's chronicle, in the preparation of which he has drawn with what appears like exquisite precision on the newly opened MI5 files of the Eddie Chapman case, leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that Canaris's organization consisted of monocled charlatans and grandiloquent clowns who swilled French champagne while German cities burned, of incompetents whose immorality did little to avert or retard their abject failure, of helpless amateurs who tried to hide their ignorance as if it were stolen silver. Not unlike the general atmosphere in Langley at this writing, I hasten to add, if recent achievements of the CIA are any indication. Yet what kudos, then, for Churchill's side?

A joke about a CIA agent comes to mind. He has been specially bred for infiltration, speaks Russian with any number of regional accents, and uses a billion-dollar edible parachute to land himself in a Soviet cornfield. Knocking on the shutters of a house in the nearest village, he asks the old peasant woman, in the name of the Most Holy Mother of God and all the saints, for a glass of water, at which she slams the window shut and yells: "Get thee hence, American spy!" He moves on to the next village, this time careful to ask for a drink in the name of the Thrice Blessed Anchorite Peter who is the region's favorite saint, whereupon the old woman there again denounces him as an American. He tries it on in a third village with the same result, and in the end throws caution to the winds: "For Christ's sake, my good babushka, how could you ever tell?" "Cuz you're a nigger," answers the babushka. I once told this joke to a group of Dutch tourists forgathered in an Italian hotel lobby. Nobody laughed, and, after a long pause, one of them explained that racist jokes were illegal in their country.

Incompetence, however, is not and has never been illegal in the free West, whose vast, sprawling, essentially Kafkaesque government bureaucracies are neither stimulated by material gain, like their corporate complements in the business world, nor prodded into action by mortal fear, like their totalitarian counterparts in Russia and elsewhere. Thus, film footage of the American agent Oleg Penkovsky being cremated alive has been used to condition the present generation of GRU officers, while *Time* reports that a government employee who takes a middling job in the private sector, as the Bank of America's head of security, "will earn more than triple what he makes as the FBI's No. 3." Indeed, if one were to make an *a priori* judgement on the matter, a dire imbalance rather than a comforting parity of competence, resolve, and resources is precisely what one would have to assume.

History confirms this. More than 30 years ago, my father published an article in *Commentary* entitled "What the CIA Knows About Russia," whose frank assessment of the disparity between the GRU and the KGB and the bureaucracies of Western intelligence, eerily reminiscent of the joke illegal in Holland, an individual is yet to rebut and an event is yet to contradict. An equally chilling imbalance emerges from the epoch in which Eddie Chapman, Macintyre's swashbuckling hero, made his reputation as a double agent, scoring success after success against the Third Reich. In his monumental *Icebreaker* trilogy, the historian Victor Suvorov has described how Stalin's spies in Germany—who had been reporting that militarily, organizationally, and from just about any other strategic vantage point, Berlin was unprepared for a war of aggression against Moscow—were promoted

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rather than punished after Hitler had opened a second front by launching his suicidal strike. They had not been asked to analyze Germany's intentions, only her military's competence, and in Stalin's view, despite the gross political miscalculation that he recognized as his own, their analysis had been accurate. The Wehrmacht entered the war in 1941, against a winter stretching across ten time zones, with 600,000 horses doing the work of armored vehicles, without antifreeze in the tank fuel of which there was a shortage, and with no winter coats or warm boots.

And, still more crucially, without intelligence. The infantile naiveté of the Germans, whose codes had been broken at Bletchley Park years before they realized that their agents in the field had become puppets of their adversaries, is the recently declassified background of *Agent Zigzag*, whose protagonist, an erstwhile bank robber and Cockney con man, offers his services to Berlin from a barbershop he has opened with his cell mate after a prison stretch in occupied Jersey. In the end, Chapman proves his loyalty to the homeland by becoming a lynchpin of Churchill's campaign of strategic deception, though not before we get the crucial glimpse of the preposterous kindergarten that was the Abwehr, generally, and of the German spy center at Nantes, in occupied France, in particular. Here, Chapman is trained in the use of Morse code, equipped with everything but the anecdotal edible parachute, and supplied with bundles of English cash sealed into a bag with Reichsbank bands still on them. Not that this would have made any difference, of course, considering that the Enigma code, and with it all the radio traffic concerning his imminent arrival by air to a Suffolk cornfield, was being read by the British.

If the intelligence of an avowedly totalitarian regime in peril could be so anecdotally inept, if a democracy in crisis could show itself capable of at least average competence or prudence, then the resulting nutcracker of a paradox, with our usual *a priori* assumptions for nuts, may be of some use as an instrument for prying open the secrets of Western political failure in Iran and Iraq, in Russia and Eastern Europe, in Mozambique and Angola, in India and Pakistan, in just about every corner of the globe where the West has lost or is losing. What does the CIA know about today's China? Nothing, I dare say.

Like Hitler's Germany preparing her "Operation Sealion, the plan for the German invasion of Britain"—notwithstanding that, as Macintyre writes, "the Abwehr had utterly failed to recruit an effective team of spies in Britain before the war"—Bush's America sells rope to her enemies without understanding its eventual uses, and assuming, in the teeth of much historical evidence to the contrary, that the eventual landings of business and commerce in countries of which the United States knows little will end differently from the Negro parachutist's brush with the babushkas. As the Eddie Chapman story suggests, it is the nation that reads the most codes, rather than the one that sells the most hamburgers, that is most likely to celebrate victory. Whether it deserves it is another question.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European editor.*

An Antidote to Atheism

by Tom Piatak

Eifelheim
by Michael Flynn
New York: Tor Books; 320 pp., $25.95

Strange as it may sound, one of the best antidotes to the angry atheism of such disaffected Britons as Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins is the recent science-fiction novel *Eifelheim* by Michael Flynn. The book, dedicated to Jean Buridan—the Paris scholastic who described inertia, a scientific concept unknown to the ancients, in the 14th century—focuses on the disappearance from the historical record of the village of Eifelheim, a disappearance that turns out to be related to an encounter between grotesque extraterrestrial visitors known as the Krenken and German villagers in 1348, on the eve of the Black Death. Flynn's novel touches on many important events in late-medieval history, including the dispute between the pope and the emperor, the conflict between Spiritual and Conventual Franciscans, and the Hundred Years' War and presents medieval Christendom with sympathy and insight as a society in which the "cool, scholastic rationalism of Paris" arose from and happily coexisted with a deep Christian faith that permeated everything. In the process, Flynn sounds themes that will appeal to many readers of *Chronicles* and tells an engaging story that captivates the reader and keeps the pages turning.

The central character (and hero) of Flynn's novel is Father Dietrich, the pastor of the village visited by the Krenken. Despite his humble benefice, Dietrich is a man of great learning, having been a student of Buridan and a colleague of William of Ockham in Paris. He is a friend of Manfred, the lord of the manor who gave shelter to Dietrich years before, and Dietrich in turn has given shelter to Joachim, an emotional Spiritual Franciscan at odds with the ecclesiastical authorities.

From the start, Dietrich is convinced that the Krenken are not demons, even though their appearance repulses him, reminding him of the gargoyles in Cologne's cathedral, which terrified him as a child. The first sign of the Krenken is an unusual electrical disturbance, which frightens the villagers but about which Dietrich concludes, "The causes are occult, but they surely are material." When he finally meets the Krenken, Dietrich concludes from the fact that they are capable of being harmed, and have children they care for, that they are mortals, not demons, and he baptizes a dying Krenken infant. Dietrich is impressed by the Krenken technolo-

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gy but, because he is well versed in the scholarly literature of his own day, not overawed. "My guests employ devices like those described by Roger Bacon," he tells his bishop.

Dietrich's faith impels him to tell the Krenken about Dietrich's "master . . . Jesus Christ, [Who] has already ransomed me with his blood." Over time, some of the Krenken accept Baptism. Krenkish society resembles a cross between a traditional oriental despotism and a rigid genetic determinism, with an immovable hierarchy fixed by birth in which it is not "natural for the greater to help the lesser." The Krenken who convert are impressed by Christian charity, which Joachim exemplifies in treating plague victims, telling Dietrich that "changing bandages . . . lancing pustules . . . wiping up the shit and vomit and the pus" is "the most glorious work of all." Such charity is perfectly in keeping with Christian precepts and, therefore, strikes us as mundane, but by showing it to us through Krenkish eyes, Flynn rightly portrays it as revolutionary.

The Krenken are also impressed by the existence of law, observing that Manfred is not an absolute ruler but is bound by the laws and customs of the manor. Dietrich tells the Krenken that "we may not obey a bad lord, nor follow an unjust command" and presents the overreaching authority of God as liberating, not despotic: "All authority is 'under God,' else authority would have no limits, and justice would be only a [lord's] will." For much of the pre-Christian and non-Christian world, justice was only the will of the ruler, and the totalitarians of the 20th century employed a similar concept with chilling effect. The Krenken experience Christianity as liberating—as, indeed, it has generally been historically.

Flynn thus uses Dietrich to explore medieval society, with its respect for both faith and reason, and its hierarchy bound by law. As Flynn notes, medieval education focused on natural philosophy, logic, mathematics, astronomy, optics, statics, and music: "Never before and since has such a large proportion of a population been educated so exclusively in logic, reason, and science." Medieval theologians, all of whom received this training, did not impede science, which, in fact, arose from the Christian understanding of reality:

> God had endowed material bodies with the ability to act upon one another by their own natures. Hence, "natural laws." If God made the entire world, then invoking God to explain the rainbow or magnetism or rectilinear motion added nothing to human understanding. Philosophers therefore sought natural explanations to natural phenomena.

Indeed, Flynn has Dietrich rely on St. Albert the Great to argue that, "in investigations of nature, experience is the only safe guide."

Flynn also uses the modern researchers investigating the disappearance of Eifelheim to point out truths about our own age. The physicist who develops a theory to explain how the Krenken were able to travel to Germany worries about being branded a "heretic" in the physics department—first, after she comes to believe that the speed of light is not a constant, and then, after her research suggests the presence at the beginning of time of something that is "Aristotelian" or even "God." No such prejudices dissuade the Krenken from detecting the presence of a Creator in nature; the Krenken had observed that a small change in any of a number of universal constants would make life impossible and concluded that "had the [Lord]-in-the-sky ordered the world in any other way, there would be no life at all." Flynn's modern researchers even come to appreciate that the medieval world attempted to be scrupulous in its treatment of its own heretics, with inquisitorial tribunals being bound by stricter rules of procedure than royal courts, with the result that "we know of cases where the accused deliberately committed blasphemy to get transferred out of [a] royal court to [an] inquisitorial court." Flynn's observations about the medieval world are supported by much solid scholarship, and the fact that they may surprise some readers only shows the persistence of historical myths rooted in the malice of the Enlightenment.

Other parts of Eifelheim call to mind Eric Voegelin, Russell Kirk, and Richard Weaver. Far from seeking to immanentize the eschaton, Dietrich has learned that political violence cannot eliminate injustice, advising the radical Joachim that "Jesus said the weeds would grow with the wheat until the Judgment." The Krenken observe the peasants teaching their children the boundaries of the manor during the Rogation days and are moved by the custom: "One cannot love a world. It is too large. But a fleck of ground as far as his eye can see, one may hold precious above all." Flynn even has William of Ockham tell his friend Dietrich, "I am no nominalist . . . I tell you, Dietl, a man becomes a heretic less for what he writes than for what others believe he has written."

I do not know whether Michael Flynn is a believer or a traditionalist of any type. But the story he tells in *Eifelheim* is an enjoyable reminder to readers that, far from being synonymous with the obscurantism and cruelty Hitchens and Dawkins ascribe to it, Christianity is in fact the cornerstone of our civilization, and we imperil that civilization by seeking to loosen its bonds.

Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.

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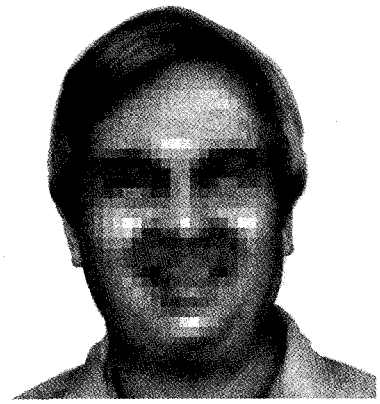
by Joe Ecclesia

Unsettling Accounts



Your Excellency:

One Sunday in September, about 60 adults gathered between Masses in the sanctuary of the basilica to hear a professor from our local university speak on the history of Islam. This speaker, a pale, young man with close-cropped hair, stood at the front of the basilica with the altar at his back and the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Adoration Chapel to his left.

"I'm here today not as a Muslim, though I am Muslim, but to speak with you about the history of Islam," he began. Lecturing with an ease polished by hundreds of classroom appearances, our guest for several minutes examined Muhammad and his religious struggles, his successful conquest of Mecca, and his death. The professor then told us about the "prophet's" followers and their subsequent invasions north along the Eastern Mediterranean and west across Northern Africa. These invasions, he contended, had little to do with religious zealotry and much to do with a desire for plunder and wealth.

Then the lecture changed. When the professor mentioned "the Middle Ages," some women on the front row, good Catholics all and dumb as dirt in their knowledge of history, sprang to life. "The Inquisition!" one of them shouted.

He looked startled, but then nodded. "Yes, the Inquisition."

"The Crusades!" another called out. "Blood and slaughter."

After the usual intellectual shenanigans—the European knights needed an outlet for violence; the Crusaders launched an unprovoked attack on Constantinople in 1204—the professor declared abruptly that "the Crusades were caused by economics only." He then proceeded to ramble, not through history, but through contemporary culture. He told us that Lebanon remained 50-percent Christian, though he neglected to mention that the Lebanese government has not taken an official religious poll in more than half a century. He lauded the freedom of Muslim women, who apparently desire the veil for privacy and for modesty's sake. (There is a fashion catalog for veiled women.) He assured us that terrorists constituted only a miniscule part of Islam, that Muslims differed greatly from one another depending on their background and culture, that the West must be patient with Islam. Encouraged by one of his female allies from the front pew, the professor reminded us that all religions produce terrorists.

At the end of this "lecture," a man (a stockbroker) rose and pointed out that we in the West frequently held open forums like the present one. Why, he asked the professor, did Islam seem so closed to the idea of freedom of speech?

"We must let the Muslims settle these things," the professor said, somewhat incongruously. "We must let Islam work out its own affairs."

After the applause, some in the audience approached the professor. Others left immediately. The man who had asked the final question wore the look of a dissatisfied student. A young woman kneeling in the adoration chapel remained as motionless in prayer as ever.

Here, Your Excellency, is what did not happen: No one in an official capacity was present to challenge the professor's historical perspectives. As it happens, I teach history to high-school students. Despite my low status on the academic totem pole, I do know that, from A.D. 732 until the present, Europe has poured out a river of blood fighting off Muslim incursions. I know that Muslims over several centuries helped destroy the Church in North Africa. I know that some Muslims have proved tolerant rulers, others harshly intolerant, just like Christians. Why was no one present to offer a counterpoint to the professor?

From my teaching experience, I am aware that many young Americans take their ideas about the Middle Ages from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, yet few notice that an attack on the Middle Ages is nearly always an attack on Christianity, specifically on our Catholic Faith. Someone from the Church should have explained to the vociferous women in the front pew that the medieval Church gave us universities and hospitals, and that the Church more than any other institution has helped elevate the status of women.

Someone might have also pointed out to these fractious critics that, unlike their Muslim counterparts, they were not dragged outside and stoned in the courtyard, or beheaded, or dressed in a veil, or ordered to keep silent. They were not forced into hiding like Agaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali woman who, along with the murdered Theo Van Gogh, dared call for change in the way Muslim men treat women.

In the crypt of the basilica are reproductions of the beautiful historical paintings by Gloria Thomas. Here on Panel VII, an Arab horseman waves a scimitar, a representative of the North African conquests of Islam. Those were the beginning of the halcyon days of Islam, when Muslims conquered half of all Christendom. The other panels, like the Church today, are strangely silent about Islam. Every once in a while, however, I look at that horseman, and think, and ponder, and brood.

How about you, Your Excellency? What do you do?

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by Scott P. Richert

The Words of Muhammad (PBUH)

When confronted with an American convert to Islam who has studied overseas, it's hard not to think today of the celebrated case of John Walker Lindh, "the American Taliban" captured by U.S. troops in Afghanistan and brought back to the United States to stand trial. "Abdul" knows that, yet he's chosen to be brutally honest with Aaron and myself, admitting that, on his first trip overseas, he studied under Shaykh Usaamah Al-Qoosee, a follower of Sayyid Qutb, the most important leader in the history of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin), an organization that practically defines radical Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood dreams of establishing a new caliphate, which would have the power to declare a *jihad*, binding on all Muslims, against the infidel.

Studying with Al-Qoosee was not Abdul's decision alone; he had relied, he says, on the advice of Magdy Kandil, one of the leaders of the Rockford mosque, who had helped guide Abdul's conversion. Kandil had studied under Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the most prominent ideologists of the Muslim Brotherhood. Qaradawi has even been offered the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood on several occasions, but he has always preferred to remain more of a religious leader than a political one. That's not to say that his religious actions don't have political consequences: During the Israeli attack on Lebanon in 2006, Qaradawi issued a *fatwa* declaring support for the Shiite Hezbollah mandatory for all Muslims, including Sunnis. (One does not have to regard the Israeli attack as just in order to recognize that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization.)

Barred from entering the United States since 1999, Qaradawi caused quite a stir in London in 2004 when he went on the BBC's *Newsnight* to defend Palestinian suicide bombing:

> I consider this type of martyrdom operation as an evidence of God's justice.
>
> Allah Almighty is just; through his infinite wisdom he has given the weak a weapon the strong do not have and that is their ability to turn their bodies into bombs as Palestinians do.

When asked about the killing of Israeli civilians by suicide bombers, Qaradawi replied that "an Israeli woman is not like women in our societies, because she is a soldier." The BBC did not report what, if anything, he said about children.

Qaradawi founded *IslamOnline*, the second-most popular Islamic website worldwide (according to *Alexa.com*), and he regularly issues *fatwas* in response to questions posted in the "Ask a Scholar" feature of the "Living Shari'ah" section of the site. One such *fatwa*, issued on April 14, 2004, declared that a boycott of both Israeli and U.S. products is morally obligatory on all Muslims (including those living in the United States):

> "Israel's" unjustified destruction and vandalism of everything has been using American money, American weapons, and the American veto. America has done this for decades without suffering the consequences of any punishment or protests about their oppressive and prejudiced position from the Islamic world.

As Abdul tells us of Magdy Kandil's connection to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, I can't help but recall Aaron's and my conversation with Kandil in February 2002. Discussing the position of Muslims in the United States after September 11, Kandil argued that there has been a backlash against Islam, which came "from some minority in the U.S. who now feel threatened by a new mi-

nority." As I wrote at the time:

> When I ask him whom he means by the older minority and add that politicians and religious leaders have seemed unusually eager to embrace Islam, Kandil looks at me in disappointment—and, perhaps, with a touch of annoyance. He knows that I know that he means Jews.

After several months in Egypt studying under Al-Qoosee, Abdul returned to Rockford. He intended to go back to Egypt to complete his license in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), but he had begun to have second thoughts about studying with an adherent of the Muslim Brotherhood. While pondering his next move, Abdul dated, his first marriage having ended a few years before. Soon, he met a woman a couple years younger than he. She was of Dutch extraction, and her family had settled in Winnebago County in the first decade of the 20th century. The East High running back had found his high-school cheerleader, from one of the small farming communities to the west of Rockford.

Abdul's future wife, a nursing student, knew nothing about Islam. The first time he broached the topic with her, Abdul says, "She thought it was a country." I laugh, recalling for Abdul and Aaron the time in the mid-80's when the girlfriend of one of my father's childhood buddies announced to us that she opposed Ronald Reagan's Central America policy because she didn't want her boyfriend dying in "some place like Guacamole."

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The cheerleader's family was nominally Christian, but nonpracticing. That would change when she married Abdul and converted to Islam, adopting the *burqa*—the head-to-toe robes worn by traditional Muslim women. Her parents returned to church, and it would take some years—and grandchildren—before they made an uneasy peace with the religion of their daughter and son-in-law.

In 1997, Abdul returned to Egypt to complete his studies in *fiqh*, but this time, he avoided the Ikhwanis and studied under a Salafi scholar. (Salafis believe that they adhere to the earliest and purest form of Islam, as practiced in the days of Muhammad and the immediately succeeding generations. The word derives from *as-salaf*, "the worthy ancestors.") Earning his license in *fiqh*, he returned to the United States; but the next year, he went overseas again, to study with a Salafi sheikh in Yemen.

As Abdul explains it, Salafism eschews political interpretations of Islam, focusing instead on the individual believer conforming his life to those of Muhammad and the first three generations of Muslims. The emphasis is on placing the various passages of the Koran and the *hadith* (the sayings of Muhammad) in historical context. That's not to say that all who are called Salafis agree with this interpretation, or even all who call themselves Salafis; in fact, some Ikhwanis use the term. But the general thrust of Salafism is away from the political action that characterizes the Muslim Brotherhood overseas and its related organizations in the United States.

That is not true, however, of the mosque in Rockford, as Abdul realized when he returned from Yemen. The *imam* (spiritual leader) at the time was Abdool Rahman Khan, a graduate of the school of *sharia* at the Islamic University of Medina. (The current *imam* graduated from the same university.) Rahman Khan had come to Rockford from Guyana, where he had served as the principal of the Guyana Islamic Institute; and he was, Abdul tells us, an Ikhwani.

Abdul believes that the hiring of Rahman Khan was no coincidence. Rockford has a small but relatively wealthy Albanian Muslim population (many popular diner-style restaurants in the area are owned by Albanians), and, at that time, the violence in Kosovo was heating up. Inside the Muslim Community Center, which houses the mosque and the Rockford Iqra School, Albanians were raising funds for the Kosovo Liberation Army and attempting to recruit warriors for the Kosovo *jihad*—including, Abdul says, himself and two of his friends, all Caucasian converts to Islam. As far as Abdul knows, they succeeded in recruiting at least two, including a tall, well-built white guy named Mike, who had run the gamut of non-Christian religions before settling on Islam.

Mike wanted to be a good Muslim, but, he told Abdul, "I just can't keep away from the pork!" His weakness was likely made moot when he went off to Afghanistan to train in an Al Qaeda camp before joining the *jihad* in Kosovo. Abdul never saw him again.

Around the same time—1999—the Rockford mosque, Abdul says, was raising funds from local Muslims to support the Pakistani *jihad* in Jammu and Kashmir. A friend of his, another Salafi, tried to convince the leadership of the mosque to give the money to indigent local Muslims. When they refused, he stole the cash and distributed it himself. The mosque had him arrested, but the charges were dropped.

By now, tensions were running high between the local Salafis—mostly Caucasian converts—and the leadership of the mosque, primarily Pakistani, Albanian, and Egyptian immigrants. When Aaron and I spent a day at the mosque and school in February 2002, we noted in the community library radical Islamic books and videotapes, many from the Islamic Propagation Centre International, an organization funded, in part, by the Bin Laden family and whose founder had met several times with Osama bin Laden himself. What we didn't know, at the time, was that there had once been many more.

Sometime in late 1999 or 2000, Abdul and a few of his Salafi friends learned of a *fatwa* issued by a Salafi scholar, declaring that materials that advocated offensive *jihad* and the Ikhwani political version of Islam were to be destroyed. Putting their faith into action, they "removed" as many as 400 to 500 books from the library—and burned them. The reaction of the mosque's leadership, not surprisingly, was anger and outrage—yet this time, they did not contact the police. It's not hard to guess why.

No longer welcome at the mosque, Abdul and his friends attempted to start a Salafi *masjid* of their own. They secured a location on Broadway Avenue—once one of Rockford's most impressive shopping districts, but now a struggling neighborhood dominated by Fort Turner, a former public school turned abortuary. They developed plans to make their *masjid* the center of a neighborhood revival, but the leadership of the mosque wasn't interested in competition. According to Abdul, they threatened him and his friends, and one prominent member of the mosque—a local doctor—was caught slashing the tires and busting the windows on a car owned by one of Abdul's fellow Salafis.

More dangerous than threats of physical violence, however, were the political connections of the mosque's leadership. While Muslims in America frequently vote Republican because of their stance on social issues, the local leadership had been very supportive of Rockford's three-term Democratic mayor. A necessary zoning change was denied, and the Salafi *masjid* never opened its doors. Eventually, Abdul and his friends were allowed back into the mosque to worship, and Abdul even enrolled his children in the school. Despite continuing tensions, an uneasy truce had been reached.

Then, at 8:46 A.M. Eastern Time on September 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 11 plowed into the 94th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, and suddenly, everything changed. ©

To read previous installments of Abdul's story, visit www.ChroniclesMagazine.org?cat=6

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Letter From Australia

by R.J. Stove

Two Cheers for Howard

"It ain't over till it's over," said Yogi Berra at his most Chestertonian. Charles de Gaulle, in more meditative style, observed: "*Les fins des régimes sont toujours tristes*." Both maxims are relevant in the context of Australia's general election on November 24, 2007, which saw John Howard—prime minister since 1996—crushed by an untried but personally popular Australian Labor Party leader, Kevin Rudd. Mr. Howard thus followed into the sunset Tony Blair and Spain's José-María Aznar, his fellow lieutenants in the so-called War on Terror. He had the additional humiliation of being defeated in his own electorate, the first Australian prime minister since 1929 to suffer this punishment.

Drawing up a balance sheet for assessing Mr. Howard's reign (the longest of any Australian leader save for Sir Robert Menzies) is difficult, purely because its highlights bear no discernible relation to the rest of his actions and give the impression of having been brought about by a different person. These highlights, which deserve to be remembered amid the general scorn Mr. Howard now inspires, are two in number: the freeing of East Timor in 1999, and the *de facto* ending two years later of mass illegal immigration.

Perhaps one day, when the principal actors in Australia's political dramas of the 1970's, 80's and early 90's are all dead, it will be possible to discuss both temperately and lengthily that hoariest and most squalid of Australian political delusions: the belief—religiously upheld by Prime Ministers Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, and Paul Keating—that Australia's basic survival depended on abjectly appeasing Indonesia. The more obviously immoral Jakarta's leading mullahs and their nominally secular stooges became, and the more blatant their genocide against Catholics in East Timor (which they invaded with full Australian approval in 1975), the larger the blank checks that successive Australian governments signed over to them; and the more desperate the defenses of this Danegeld which the "Jakarta lobby" of think tanks and foreign-policy bureaucrats resorted to making. It is not as if we can even trace all of this craven behavior to Australian sectarianism. After all, the most degenerate and embarrassing apologist for Indonesia was a self-proclaimed Catholic—namely, Mr. Keating. Meanwhile successive Indonesian presidents merely took Australian money—and, in particular, Australian military training—as if it were their God-given right. In 1998, one such president (B.J. Habibie), more honest than the rest, explained in pellucid language to his country's militia what their own peacemaking role would be: "Your job is to clean East Timor from the East to the West and leave nothing alive but ants."

No more. Once disgust among Australian voters at Jakarta's murder machine proved too great for even Mr. Howard to overlook, he sent Australian armed forces into East Timor. In so doing, he ended the quarter-century-old antipodean policy of craven groveling to Indonesia's tinpot tyrants. The threats of Indonesian *revanchisme*, with which that failed state's Australian toadies sought to terrify us, proved as insubstantial as dreams.

Mr. Howard's other worthwhile achievement had connections with the first. Indonesia, however humiliated, could still be a nuisance to Australia. Successive boatloads of Third World arrivals on Australian soil attested to this fact, as well as to other Third World nations' tendency to consider Australia a garbage dump for their own "wretched refuse." It seemed unimaginable that Mr. How-

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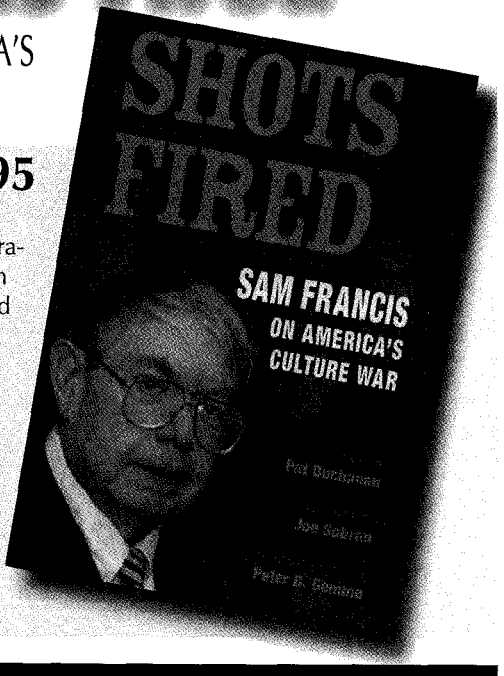
—Aaron D. Wolf



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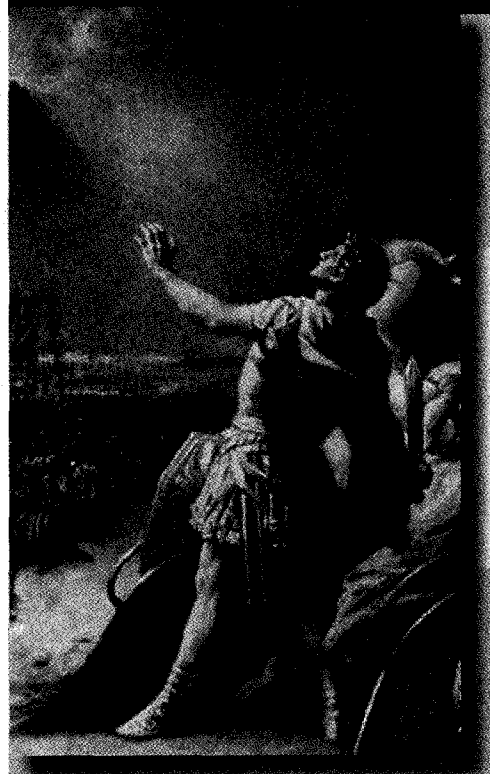
ard could ever take on Australia's own bleeding-heart multiculti lobbies, who, of course, regarded these boatloads as godsends. Then the miracle happened. Emboldened partly by September 11, the prime minister started using language not heard from Australian officialdom in almost four decades: "We will decide who come to this country and the circumstances in which they come." For a while there, he actually sounded like immigration-restrictionist gadfly Pauline Hanson. As a result, the 2001 election saw, for the first time since 1966, a swing toward the incumbent administration. The people smugglers, understandably amazed at the very thought of an Australian head of government meaning business, were sufficiently frightened by this prospect to take their filthy trade elsewhere.

So much for Mr. Howard's merits; but his sins make a depressing catalog. Early in his first term, after Tasmania's Port Arthur massacre, he imposed on us some of the most punitive and degrading gun laws of any ostensibly free nation outside Canada. His contempt for states' rights resulted in the most centralized rule Australia has ever had. So little did his own allies trust him that one of his own senators, George Brandis, was obliged in 2004 to deny having called him a "lying rodent." (Senator Brandis refused to dispute having called him "a rodent.") Lusting as Mr. Howard did for mere longevity in office, he filleted the Liberal Party to which he belonged, with the result that not only is the new post-Howard federal Opposition a mere joke, but the party is, if anything, still feebler at state level. Not once since 2001 have the Liberals won a single state or territorial election. His own attempts to cling to the prime ministry by darkly invoking labor-union dictatorship if he was defeated—for all the world as if Australia in 2007 were as union-paralyzed as was Britain in 1978-79—proved nothing except his diminished sense of reality. While illegal immigration has been staunched, legal immigration remains at postwar highs: more than 131,000 during the 2005-06 fiscal year. As for Mr. Howard's insistence on Australian membership in the Coalition of the Willing (that ultimate neocon betrayal of genuine conservatism), this played little overt part in the election campaign. Yet among parents of draft-age children, it probably did as much as his anti-union rhetoric to make him hated.

Mr. Rudd—a boyish-seeming 50 years old, telegenic, clever, fluent in Mandarin, and suitably ruthless in private—cannot be seriously incommoded by anything the Liberals in their current condition might offer as a counterweight to him. There is still room, in Australia, for a genuinely right-wing, socially conservative party to fling the Liberals into the trash can and to offer against Mr. Rudd's smooth bromides "a choice, not an echo." But no such party can flourish as long as it is too scared of Big Business to demand any immigration cutbacks.

R. J. Stove writes from Melbourne and is the author of A Student's Guide to Music History *(ISI Books).*

THE CHRISTIAN AGE: Themes in Medieval History



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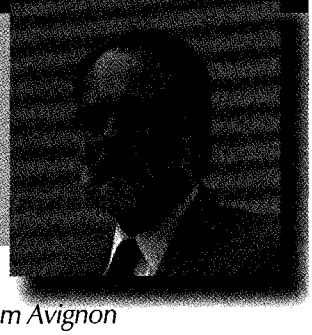

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Letter From Texas

by R. Cort Kirkwood

Mr. Bush and the Mexican Murderer

When he was governor of Texas, President George W. Bush presided over the execution of 152 murderers. Yet today, as if to turn the phrase "Don't mess with Texas" on its head, El Presidente wants to stop the Lone Star State from giving the hot shot to a Mexican murderer and rapist.

As disturbing as José Medellin's heinous crime are the lengths to which Bush has gone to protect him from the chilling gush of the executioner's hypodermic: The President has backed Medellin's argument before the U.S. Supreme Court that Texas must, in deference to the will of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), give him another hearing. The Supreme Court will make its ruling sometime this spring, and its decision could affect the cases of 50 other Mexicans on death row.

Medellin's notoriety arises from his enthusiastic participation in one of the more brutal deeds in the annals of illegal-alien crime. It began with two innocent girls who found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

On June 24, 1993, Jennifer Ertman (14) and Elizabeth Pena (16) were walking home from a friend's apartment in Houston, Texas, just before midnight. Their route took them through a city park, where Medellin and other members of the Black and Whites gang, including one juvenile and Derrick Sean O'Brien, a black man, were drinking and "beating in" a new member. You don't have to be Ellery Queen to figure out what happened next.

For an entire hour, the gang raped and sodomized the girls. "The confessions of the gang members," one account goes, "indicated that there was never less than 2 men on each of the girls at any one time." After the rape, the gang strangled Jenny with O'Brien's red nylon belt. He pulled on one end while Medellin, according to O'Brien's testimony, pulled on the other until it snapped. They finished the job with Jenny's shoelaces. "The bitch wouldn't die," Medellin complained afterward. The gang also strangled Elizabeth with her shoelaces, and the coroner testified that they knocked out two of Elizabeth's front teeth. Then the gang members stomped the girls' necks and kicked in Jenny's ribs. Authorities found the girls' bodies, rotting in the Texas heat, four days later. In another macabre twist, O'Brien showed up on videotape smiling amid a crowd watching investigators at the scene.

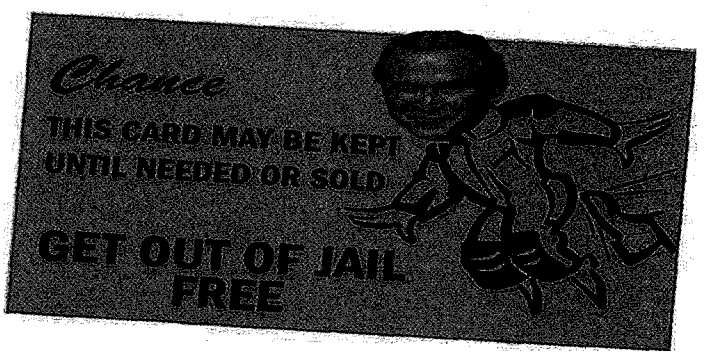
O'Brien was executed in July 2006, and others who were present landed in prison, but justice for Medellin has eluded the Ertman and Pena families. In October, when Medellin's case went to the Supreme Court, FOX News reported that Randy Ertman, Jennifer's father,

> feels betrayed by Bush's decision. Ertman shook Bush's hand when he was running for president, asking him if he remembered the girls and if he would keep their killers on death row. Bush said he would keep them on death row . . .
>
> "He shook my hand and lied," Ertman said.

Technically, Bush didn't lie: He broke a promise. The global legal contretemps began when the Mexican government dusted off the little-known 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, which requires authorities to offer foreign arrestees the chance to consult with diplomats. Not surprisingly, Houston's police and other local departments were unaware of this aged, arcane tittle of international law. Because Medellin and 50 other Mexicans on death row were never offered the required consultation, Mexico sued the United States in the ICJ. Led by a Chinese communist judge, this august panel of solons ruled that the states in question, mainly Texas and California, must convene hearings to determine whether the convictions arose from a lack of diplomatic consultation. The international court also ordered the Bush administration to review the cases, and the administration, in turn, ordered each state to offer the defendants a new hearing. Medellin, who waived his Miranda rights and confessed to killing Ertman and Pena, was the first convicted murderer to seek redress. He appealed his conviction to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, which turned down his and Bush's argument last year because, it said, neither the President's nor the ICJ's mandates are "binding federal law" that supersede Texas statutes. In other words, the court ruled that Bush exceeded his constitutional authority. So Bush took Texas to the Supreme Court.

As Cliff Kincaid of Accuracy in Media observed, President Bush's attack on Texas is part of his plan to ensnare the United States in an ever-expanding web of international treaties and protocols that undermine American sovereignty. For the Ertmans and Penas, however, the nut of the case is justice for their daughters. And for the rest of us, it's this awful truth: Federal authorities don't just refrain from deporting illegal aliens before they can rape and murder. They argue in favor of the murderers and rapists before the Supreme Court.

R. Cort Kirkwood is the author of Real Men: Ten Courageous Americans To Know And Admire *(Cumberland House).*



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by Andrei Navrozov

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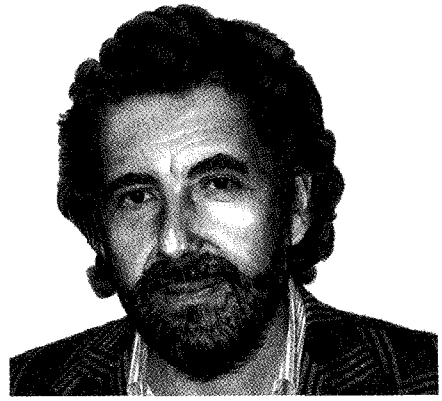

I was married once. Twice, actually. No, just the once, really, because the union had been annulled before I married again for the second or, rather, the first time, on the legal grounds of mutual and substantial misunderstanding. In reality, just then I had met the woman who would become my second or nearly first wife and whom, 18 years later, I would divorce for the sake of another, though it was she, my second wife, who would file for divorce, on the legal grounds of adultery with an unnamed woman.

One I shall call Kay, and to the other, unnamed woman, who incidentally never did marry me in the end, no name can be given save her own, and I have not the energy to write it here. Kay was 17 when we met, 26 when she bore me a son, 35 when she signed the divorce papers. How beguiling the safety one finds in numbers. But one's confidence may be misplaced, and in the first instance her actual age was 17 years, 2 months and 9 days. Commencement exercises at the school where she boarded, two hours from Grand Central Station, were held on a certain date that May. The vernal equinox was the day of her birthday in March, and by subtracting the lesser from the greater I now arrive at that totally accurate figure.

The day in March, the first of spring, is the Persian New Year, Nawruz. This was the name a Persian ancestor of mine brought with him to Russia in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, along with the consignment of a carpet. It must have been quite a carpet because, with his name jauntily Russified by the addition of a possessive suffix, the wandering idler stuck to Muscovy and was later ennobled, with the title of Prince of Greater Kabarda. Kabarda being an inaccessibly mountainous principality in the Caucasus, I suppose the honorific was of delicate bloom. I have always imagined it as a 16th-century equivalent of having squirreled away just enough to pass the remainder of one's life in a Warsaw café.

Kay still had a year of school ahead and was only at the commencement to see the older children rewarded for their good behavior, their way with the lacrosse stick, and their family's loyalty to the famous school. I was there with my wicked godfather Igor, a painter, once well known in Moscow and now a displaced person like myself, whose children were in the graduating class.

It was Godfather Igor who had bullied me into marrying in the first place. "What else do you want," he pronounced from behind his easel, after being introduced to a girl who had offered to help me find investors to keep a publishing project of mine going, "the girl's comely enough. She's from a rich family, she's politically connected, she's sober and organized. Marry her, and she'll make something out of you, something serious I mean.

"If you don't, you'll just be a rootless idler for the rest of your life, a Russian flibbertigibbet with funny opinions incongruously resident in the United States of America, a provincial country where eccentrics are not allowed to be poor any more than foreigners are allowed to be clever or women ugly. But then again, the present is inherently fraudulent everywhere. We used to live in a godforsaken place where falsification of the past was a way of life. What we must learn to cope with, now that we're here, is falsification of the future."

Under the law of the Russian Church, a man may marry three times, and it is sometimes said that the first time round he marries for no reason, the second time for love, and the third for fun. Here, at least, was a reason, and while it can be argued that my hearkening this marked a tentative step in the direction of prostitution, equally it can be argued that prostitution has no need of reasons, every penny of its *quid pro quo* as transparent as those of baking and candlestick-making. Much more so than those of marriage.

The fact that the reason worked on me was in itself problematic. I was living in a paradoxical country, one that could be described as provincial only up to a point. Culturally, America was antipodean, and although the attitude to the three sample groups—eccentrics, foreigners, and women—might have been picked by my godfather out of the painted air of this inveterate jester's splenetic fancy, it was alarming enough to remind one that here the world one had grown up loving had been stood on its head. Still more ominously, America was futuristic in its general outlook—in the same benighted way Bolshevik Russia appeared futuristic to H.G. Wells, who after all was an expert in the subject—that is, forward-looking in the sense that it was filled with a foreboding of totalitarianism. The omens of this future were almost never discussed, either among the general mass of the population or by Wells' successors in optimism, but we foreigners, having come from godforsaken places that have been through the hoax, thought ourselves too clever to keep our mouths shut.

It was the futuristic idea of womanhood that in my impressions of life in the United States I singled out for contemplation. For, ever since Adam strayed into horticulture, it is by how man tends woman that he stands or falls, and the treatment of women is the Rorschach test of every subsequent civilization. Besides, the chief nutrient of my impressions at the time was wild oats, and women were the fertile ground. ◁

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by Srdja Trifkovic

So Goes Old Europe

Last December 10, after four months of futile shuttle diplomacy, the mediating effort by the U.N. Contact Group "troika" to reach an agreement on the final status for Kosovo predictably collapsed. "Neither party was able to cede its position on the fundamental question of sovereignty," the U.S.-E.U.-Russian group reported to the U.N. Secretary General. The European Union leaders reached the same conclusion on December 14 and made a feeble offer to Serbia—immediately rejected by Belgrade—of accelerated E.U. membership in exchange for "flexibility" over Kosovo's status.

All negotiations were doomed to fail because, as Condoleezza Rice declared from the outset, independence would be reached "one way or another." The Kosovo Albanian leaders—war criminals and heroin kingpins with jihadist ties—could afford to sit back and dismiss out of hand any proposal that fell short of what the Americans had promised.

The Albanians will likely proceed with a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) after the second round of the presidential election in Serbia (February 2), with the U.S.-imposed delay calculated to ensure the reelection of Serbia's "reformist, pro-Western" President Boris Tadic. The UDI will be recognized by the United States, by the Islamic world, and by some—but by no means all—E.U. countries.

Serbia's Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica has a number of options. They range from the blockade of the secessionist province—which gets two thirds of its food, consumer goods, and electricity from central and northern Serbia—to the declaration, supported by parliamentary vote, that Serbia is no longer seeking E.U. membership and will henceforth develop closer political, economic, and military ties with Russia.

Russia, China, and India, and dozens of Asian and African countries with secessionist problems—including the most populous predominantly Muslim country, Indonesia—will deem the secession of Kosovo illegal and invalid. The theory that outside powers can award part of a state's sovereign territory to a violent ethnic or religious minority, if that minority is able to provoke a violent government response and secure a "humanitarian" intervention from abroad, would put in question the borders of some two-dozen states.

By accepting at face value the standard claim of "genocide" by, say, Tamils, Chechens, Palestinians, Kurds, Kashmiris, *etc.*, the "International Community" will create endless problems for itself. Furthermore, the theory that parts of a state's sovereign territory should belong to a "repressed" ethnic or religious minority with a localized plurality would also be an argument for the extension of "Aztlan" or La Repubblica del Norte to the San Francisco Bay Area, Denver, and Dallas.

Several E.U. members (Spain, Slovakia, Rumania, Greece, Cyprus, Malta) will not toe the line. Israel is understandably apprehensive of the precedent of outside countries imposing a solution to an intractable political and territorial quarrel, even if one of the parties rejects the proposed solution as contrary to her vital national interests.

On balance, a U.S.-sponsored Republic of "Kosova" is likely to be as stillborn legally as it is already collapsed economically, socially, and morally. We are facing yet another Balkan drama of mainly American making that promises to be highly destabilizing for the region, detrimental to European security, and incomprehensible to at least half the world. State Department bureaucrats still claim that Kosovo would not set a precedent, but their words cannot change reality. The "frozen conflicts" in the former Soviet Union may be defrosted instantly, and the best Kosovo could hope for is to become a frozen conflict itself.

Why are U.S. policymakers so hell-bent on doing the wrong thing? Are they seriously hoping that they can curry favor in the Islamic world by being generous to Bosnia's Muslims or Kosovo's Albanians? Such a notion betrays an incredible naiveté about the jihadist mind-set, which has never been impressed by concessions, as our relations with Osama bin Laden have shown over the years. Don't they see that a victory in Kosovo would merely stimulate the jihadists' demand for further concessions elsewhere?

Only a week after September 11, the *Washington Times* reported that the hijackers were "connected to [an] Albanian terrorist cell":

> Albania is one of several places U.S. intelligence agencies are focusing their resources . . . Islamic radicals, including supporters of bin Laden, have been supporting Albanian rebels fighting in the region, including members of the Kosovo Liberation Army . . . KLA members have been trained at bin Laden training camps in Afghanistan . . . As of last year [2000], the group operated a residence in Tirana, and the CIA has been pressing Albania's government to expel all associates of the Islamic terrorists.

Two months later, we learned of "Al Qaeda's Balkan Links" (in the European edition of the *Wall Street*

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Journal), and, in March 2002, Conrad Black's *National Post* ran a piece entitled "U.S. Supported al-Qaeda Cells during Balkan Wars, Fought Serbian Troops":

> Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda terrorist network has been active in the Balkans for years, most recently helping Kosovo rebels battle for independence from Serbia with the financial and military backing of the United States and NATO . . . In the years immediately before the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, the al-Qaeda militants moved into Kosovo . . . to help ethnic Albanian extremists of the KLA mount their terrorist campaign against Serb targets in the region.

Why, then, are so many Western leaders on both sides of the Atlantic so persistent in supporting an illegal, immoral, and self-defeating act that will create a new base for jihadism? The real answer is that they hate the Serbs, and they hate the Serbs because they hate their own past.

Soon, the *reliquiae reliquiarum* of the Serbs' demographically exhausted state will comprise only those lands on which nobody else can establish any kind of claim. The West is demanding that they accept and absorb postmodern cultural matrices to prove that they are fit to be integrated, politically and economically, into "Europe"—which is constantly used as misleading shorthand for the European Union.

The upholders of postmodernia see the continued existence of a distinctly Serbian cultural space as an unpardonable anachronism and a potential threat to those lands (Germany, Sweden, and Holland, for instance) where the grand *Gleichschaltung* has been completed. No defiant village that remembers old songs and myths, that remembers ancestors and celebrates old battles, is allowed to remain in the shadow of the Euro-legions.

In the meantime, the old E.U. "core" is rapidly morphing into a cultural wasteland in which historical amnesia and aesthetic relativism are promoted to the detriment of creativity: There is no French writer worth reading today, no Dutch painter worth sponsoring, no German composer worth hearing. If the process is so far advanced in those countries that used to define "the West" or "Europe," the promoters of the Frankfurtian Long March rightly hope that Serbia, too, will relent and replace her obsolete and dangerous mythical consciousness with a new, global one. They claim that only by discarding the burden of their mythologized history, and the illusion that they are in any way special—except, perhaps, in the magnitude of their crimes—can the Serbs become "normal" and cease to be a threat to themselves and others.

Blissfully unaware of the cultural tectonic shift that has taken place in "the West," many Serbian political leaders, analysts, and institutions keep invoking old-fashioned arguments in support of their position that Kosovo ought to remain part of Serbia. They point out that Kosovo was the heartland of the Serbian medieval state; that it contains many priceless monuments of Christian art and architecture, which define Serbia's contribution to the common European heritage; and that, as "Serbia's Jerusalem," Kosovo must not fall to the insurgent *jihad*. The Serbs imagine that they are talking to the Westerners of another era, the era that produced De Gaulle and Mitterand, Adenauer and Schmidt, Rebecca West and Alfred Sherman—and others born in the quarter-century before 1920, with whom such arguments could be reasonably expected to resonate. The problem is that they are dead and have been replaced by a new breed of Westerner, who is distinguished from his predecessor by his rejection of the value and importance of the historical, cultural, spiritual, and civilizational legacy of our common civilization.

Those who argue that they should be entitled to keep a land because they have a centuries-long historical bond to it, because their ancestors had built lovely Christian churches on it, because its heritage underpins their moral code and spirituality based on Christian martyrdom, and because they are defending themselves against an aggressive and resurgent Islam . . . to this new Western mind-set, anyone who makes those arguments is unconsciously arguing in favor of having that territory taken away.

The Serbs' arguments—especially when presented eloquently and logically—only prove that Kosovo must be detached from Serbia permanently. Whatever is said to support Serbia's historical, cultural, spiritual, and civilizational right to Kosovo is received among the Western elite class as yet further proof why Kosovo must be given to the Albanians, who, by virtue of being overwhelmingly Muslim (of the "moderate" variety), are perceived as perfectly natural allies of the Western elite class.

The U.S. and E.U. policies toward Kosovo, Bosnia, Chechnya, Cyprus, and other hot spots where Islam confronts traditionally Christian communities are not the only display of Western self-hatred and Islamophilia: The pathology is evident in their own countries—or, to be more precise, in the countries over which they rule but to which they no longer feel any natural bond of kinship and obligation. Europe's multilateralists and Washington's neoconservatives share the same distaste for traditional, naturally evolving societies and cultures. Divisions between them arise only with regard to the best means of accomplishing their common goal.

Serbia must not give up Kosovo. By doing so, she would encourage the spirit that seeks the death of Europe and its surrender to the regional totalitarianism of Brussels today, and the global totalitarianism of Muhammad's successors tomorrow. Not for the first time, the Serbs are fighting a fight in Kosovo that is not theirs alone.

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CHRISTIANITY

Enemies of the *Motu Proprio*

by Alberto Carosa

In a private conversation before the release of the *motu proprio* "*Summorum Pontificum*," a leading personality of U.K. Catholicism predicted that the reinstatement of the Traditional Latin Mass would grant again such an abundant flow of graces that it would even effect the restoration of society on sound Christian principles. While that outcome remains to be seen, the release of the *motu proprio* has certainly sparked a series of controversies and debates—especially in Italy, the heart of Catholicism, and that goes a long way in showing how sensitive the issue is among faithful and nonfaithful alike.

The news, which occupied a full page in *La Stampa* (November 26), that three priests went on an unprecedented "Mass strike" over the issue is still sending shock waves. The priests were not striking in protest of the *motu proprio*, as one might presume; instead, diocesan priests in the area of Domodossola (in northwestern Italy's Piedmont region) who were already celebrating the older (or "extraordinary," as termed in the *motu proprio*) form of the Roman Rite on a daily basis were protesting against their bishops, who would like them to celebrate the *Novus Ordo* (the "ordinary" form of the Roman Rite, as described in the *motu proprio*) and to say the Old Mass only once on Sundays and other feast days. Other Italian bishops have been even more defiant, plainly and openly criticizing the *motu proprio* and prohibiting the Traditional Latin Mass from being celebrated in their dioceses at all.

Each of these three priests may be overreacting to his bishop's decision to limit the number of Masses (a restriction that is not justified by the provisions of the *motu proprio*), but the recalcitrant bishops are directly resisting the will of Benedict XVI. This subversion was aptly described as "disobedient and proud" by Archbishop Albert Malcolm Ranjith Patabendige Don, secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. The senior archbishop, a close aide to Benedict in the implementation of the *motu proprio*, told the Catholic News Agency (November 23, 2007) that he decried the action "and even rebellion" of many bishops who are trying to limit access to the Old Mass. "On the part of some dioceses, there have been interpretive documents that inexplicably aim to limit the Motu Proprio of the pope," he noted. His comments come in response to "interpretations" of the *motu proprio* supported by the bishops of England and Wales that priests still needed to ask permission from their bishops to celebrate the Tridentine Mass. Archbishop Ranjith said that, in these dissents, "there hide, on the one hand, ideological prejudices and, on the other hand, pride, which is one of the most serious sins." He reminded the bishops that they, "in particular, have sworn fidelity to the pontiff . . . "

In contrast to the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, Benedict has not given in to such intimidation and promises to stay the course, so much so that the Vatican, through the secretary of the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei," Msgr. Camille Perl, has announced that an additional document is being prepared and will be published by the commission explaining some specific points of *Summorum Pontificum*, including what criteria may be used to identify a stably existing group of the faithful (whose request for the older form of the Mass is supposed to be granted) and clarifications regarding the differences between the calendars of the two forms of the Roman Rite. This follow-up document, said Monsignor Perl, is in sharp response to "Too many disobedient bishops and priests."

"You'd have to ask them," was the senior prelate's diplomatic answer when asked why so many bishops and priests are opposing the *motu proprio*. "Personally, I believe that the problem is of a more general nature," he opined. "Today, in many spheres of society, the sense of obedience and respect of authority has been lost. Few truly are, so to say, able to obey." The Second Vatican Council never abolished the previous missal, he pointed out. "I hold that Pope Benedict XVI has done well to lift its restrictions, thus underscoring the value of a patrimony, a jewel of the Church."

In an interview in the Holy See's daily *L'Osservatore Romano* (November 19-20), Archbishop Ranjith did not hesitate to say that the liturgical abuses and lack of respect for the norms of the ordinary rite of the Mass help explain why Pope Benedict XVI decided to lift the restrictions on the celebration of the rite of St. Pius V. "[T]hroughout the years, the liturgy suffered too many abuses that were ignored by the bishops," he said, so "Benedict XVI could not remain silent." This was compounded by the fact that requests for the ancient rite "were increasing over time" in direct proportion to the "lack of fidelity and the loss of the sense of beauty" in the liturgy. So it was not only traditionalist groups who were asking for the Old Mass but those who were scandalized by the priests' lack of respect for the rubrics of the *Novus Ordo*.

In a speech entitled "*Geloof, gehoorzaamheid en theologie*" ("Faith, Obedience, and Theology"), delivered at the annual meeting of the Dutch Latin Liturgy Association (Vereniging voor Latijnse Liturgie) on October 6, 2007, Archbishop Ranjith went even further. "What the Holy Father says, has to be obeyed in the Church," he contended.

> If we do not follow this principle, we will allow ourselves to be used as instruments of the devil,

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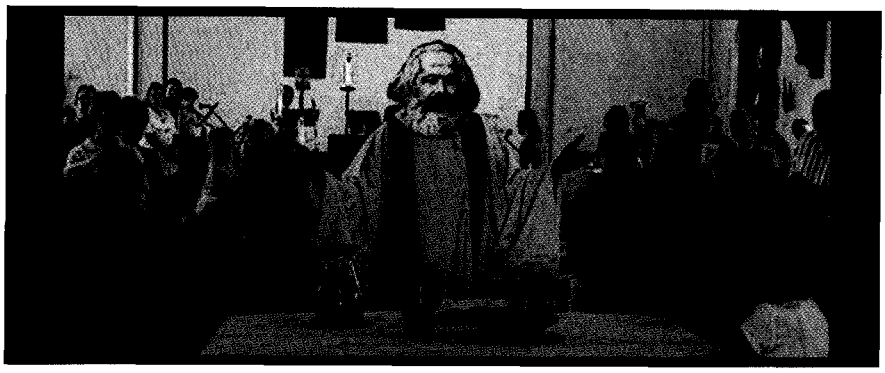

and nobody else. This will lead to discord in the Church, and slows down her mission. We do not have the time to waste on this. Otherwise we behave like emperor Nero, fiddling on his violin while Rome was burning. The churches are emptying, there are no vocations, the seminaries are empty. Priests become older and older, and young priests are scarce.

This Sri Lankan prelate is generally described by acquaintances as a mild and circumspect man, so the use of such pointed language ("instruments of the devil"), as some analysts are arguing, suggests that he has been encouraged by his superiors to speak boldly. As Archbishop Ranjith's immediate superior at the Congregation for Divine Worship, Francis Cardinal Arinze, has been mostly silent about the *motu proprio*, one can reasonably conclude that any such encouragement has come from Benedict himself.

The Pope's decision to make Giovanni Maria Vian the editor of *L'Osservatore Romano* is another indication of his determination to see that his *motu proprio* is implemented. After Mr. Vian took the helm, the Holy See's paper finally started to cover the "battle on liturgy"—as exemplified by the interview with Archbishop Ranjith. In the past, the subject of the Old Mass was not addressed in its pages.

According to the Italian news agency Adnkronos (as reported on *rorate-caeli.blogspot.com*), the Commission "Ecclesia Dei" will soon publish an admonition to the seminaries "in which it is required that the celebration of the Latin Mass be taught to future priests." It is not yet clear, though, if the order will be a separate document or part of the above-mentioned clarification of the *motu proprio*.

Interestingly, Archbishop Ranjith also said that the dissenting bishops and priests are motivated, in part, by "ideological prejudices." As laymen, we are fully entitled to thrash out such "ideological prejudices," since *ideology* always carries a political dimension. And here, this dimension is not difficult to see: Those who are most active and vociferous in opposing the *motu proprio*—clergy and laity alike—are the same people who regularly side with and support the most progressive sectors of the Catholic Church: those for whom Church history starts with the Second Vatican Council.

In particular, the members of the "School of Bologna" have been very successful in spreading and imposing this progressive vision, especially through the work of Giuseppe Alberigo and Fr. Giuseppe Dossetti, who were reported by the Catholic News Agency (November 12, 2007) as having gone so far as to claim that Vatican II was "a Copernican revolution, the passing to . . . another Catholicism." Prof. Giuseppe Alberigo of the University of Bologna published a five-volume set between 1995 and 2001 on the history of the Church, including a volume on Vatican II. For his part, Father Dossetti (1913-96) was a confidant of Giacomo Cardinal Lercaro, one of the four moderators of Vatican II, and is on record as having bragged that he successfully swayed its outcome by guiding its procedures, even though his faction of progressive cardinals represented the overwhelming minority of the Council's fathers. As recalled by archbishop emeritus of Bologna Giacomo Cardinal Biffi in his newly published memoirs ("*Memorie e digressioni di un italiano cardinale*"), Father Dossetti was also the founding father of "*cattocomunismo*" (a combination of *catholic* and *communism*), a sort of impossible and utopian synthesis between Christianity and Marxism that forms the backbone of the ideology upheld by the leading progressive factions in the Church. Needless to say, as with all such unnatural hybridizations, the end result is plain communism, with no real semblance of Christianity remaining. *Cattocomunismo* means the acceptance of virtually all of leftism's "values," from abortion and euthanasia to homosexual unions.

Benedict XVI has made it no mystery as to where he stands on these controversies. Besides flatly restating that Vatican II is in full and strict continuity with the Church's Tradition (which contradicts the interpretation of the Council as a "break with the past"), in his discourse to the Roman Curia on December 22, 2005, he insisted that the Church-promoted culture of life and family is "non-negotiable." Additionally, in his recent encyclical *Spe salvi* ("Saved by Hope"), released on November 30, 2007, he blasted Marxism as an ideology that has produced terrible cruelty and injustice. He said that the ideologies and revolutions of the 19th and 20th centuries had failed to satisfy humanity's search for justice, and that Christian hope is the answer. Hopes of a just but godless order of things produced atheistic ideologies, which yielded "the greatest forms of cruelty and violations of justice." Marxism has blazed a "trail of appalling destruction." Marx's fundamental error, he surmised, "is materialism," which spawns a vision of society that is devoid of traditional morality and directed toward man, not God.

Perhaps this is why the followers of *cattocomunismo* are crying foul at the *motu proprio*: Any attempt to restore the Church's tradition and authority threatens their agenda.

Alberto Carosa is an independent journalist who writes from Rome.

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What could we expect from a second President Clinton?

The Nonpatriotic President

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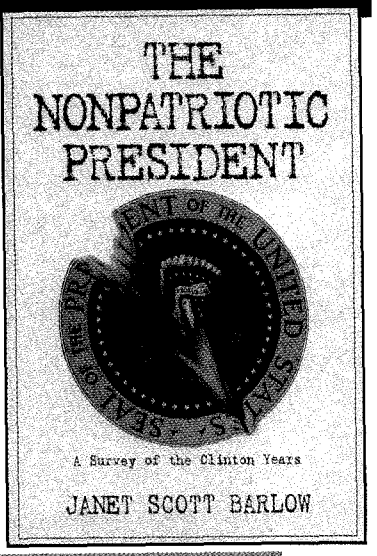
by Janet Scott Barlow



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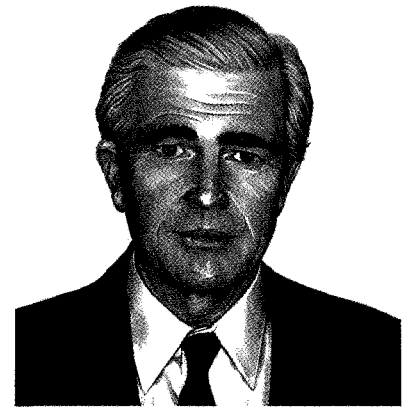
by George McCartney

Who's That Angel of Death?



No Country for Old Men

Produced and distributed by Miramax Films
Directed and written by Joel and Ethan Coen

It's not often that an audience gasps at the end of a movie and shouts, "What?" or "You've got to be kidding" at the screen. But that's just what several people did in the theater in which I watched *No Country for Old Men*. They were not reacting to what had been shown but, rather, to what had been withheld. In adapting Cormac McCarthy's novel to the screen, filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen have been almost clinically faithful. They have even adhered to McCarthy's willful refusal to provide a climax and resolution to his narrative.

The novel examines how blind chance and ineluctable fate intersect, contradictorily enough, in an arbitrary world, and how human beings react when this existential absurdity finally dawns on them. And dawn it does, repeatedly, through the agency of a bone-cold angel of death named Chigurh (Javier Bardem), an implacable force given to demonstrating precisely what it means to live in a meaningless world.

Chigurh is a killer who enjoys giving his prey the opportunity to gamble at the edge of their mortality. Once he has them cornered, he flips a coin and asks them to call the toss. Should they win, the unspoken prize will be their lives. When one of his unsuspecting victims, a convenience-store owner, objects that he doesn't know what he stands to win, Chigurh tells him simply, "Everything."

But the man persists. "I didn't put nothin' up."

"Yes you did," Chigurh replies. "You've been putting it up your whole life. You just didn't know it." He points out that the date on the coin is 1958.

> "It's been traveling twenty-two years to get here. And now it's here. And I'm here. . . . Anything can be an instrument. . . . Small things . . . They pass from hand to hand. People don't pay attention. And then one day there's an accounting. And after that nothing is the same.

I'm quoting from the novel, but most of this dialogue is in the film, and Bardem delivers it with an air of disinterested finality that petrifies the shop owner, who belatedly recognizes that, in Chigurh, he has met his own fate. For Chigurh, every moment is fatally decisive. Ordinary humanity fails to notice this. They are distracted either by their everyday lives or by their futile belief in the purposeful order of things. But, as Chigurh says, there will be an accounting for such childish inattention.

McCarthy takes a common experience most of us have had from time to time and uses it to dramatize a sort of discount existentialism. When our world is suddenly upturned by the unexpected—a traffic accident, the death of someone close, a dire medical diagnosis, or an implacable hit man—our minds instinctively scramble to account for this affront to our sense of order. Consider an auto accident. At the point of impact, we go into a mental stutter that makes it seem that we knew the collision was coming moments before it arrived. Psychologists report that this is the mind's way of maintaining a sense of reasonable order in the face of unreasonable events, which might otherwise unmoor us from our comfortable certainties. Once we have recovered our bearings again—if, of course we are lucky enough to recover at all—the collision does seem to have been absurd, and life, more arbitrary than we had thought.

Chigurh's fatal message stalks West Texas in 1980 as he pursues Lloyd Moss (Josh Brolin), a Vietnam veteran who has stumbled upon the aftermath of a drug-deal shoot-up in the desert. Amid a passel of bullet-ridden corpses, he finds a bag stuffed with two million dollars. He decides to take the money, and, from that moment, he is a marked man. We never learn who has hired Chigurh to hunt Moss beyond some fleeting scenes of well-dressed executives in a high-rise glass-and-steel office building. This keeps Chigurh slightly inexplicable and wholly symbolic, a fusion of murderous Mexican and mystical Tibetan, perhaps.

Also seeking Moss is Sheriff Ed Tom Bell, played with stone-faced I've-seen-it-all stoicism by Tommy Lee Jones, who owns this particular role. There is a fillip of difference here, however. Now in his 60's, Bell is no longer unflappable. In his narration, he tells us, "The crime we have now you can hardly take its measure." He's a man who has always wanted to save people but now finds his mission increasingly difficult to fulfill, what with kids walking the streets with "green hair and bones in their noses" and the waste and carnage inflicted by drug use. When asked how he has "let crime get so out of hand in [his] county," Bell explains that "it starts when you begin to overlook bad manners. Any time you quit hearing Sir and Mam the end is pretty much in sight." Is this McCarthy speaking for himself? He is 73, after all.

America has become no country for old men, but not in the way Wil-

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liam Butler Yeats meant in "Sailing to Byzantium," the poem from which McCarthy plucked his title. Yeats invoked Byzantium as a sort of salvation from "the fury and the mire of the human veins," a realm of changeless poise achieved through the alchemy of the great iconic Eastern Catholic art still to be found in Istanbul, where Constantinople once stood. McCarthy refers, rather, to an older generation born in the 1920's who are recoiling from the reckless hedonism that was unleashed in America in the 1960's and continues with us today. Bell is a good man baffled by what the world has become and longing for some salvation, which doesn't seem to be on his particular horizon. As he remarks to his elderly uncle, "I always thought when I got older that God would sort of come into my life in some way. He didn't. I don't blame him. If I was him I'd have the same opinion about me that he does."

But, his uncle sagely informs him, "You don't know what he thinks." Amen.

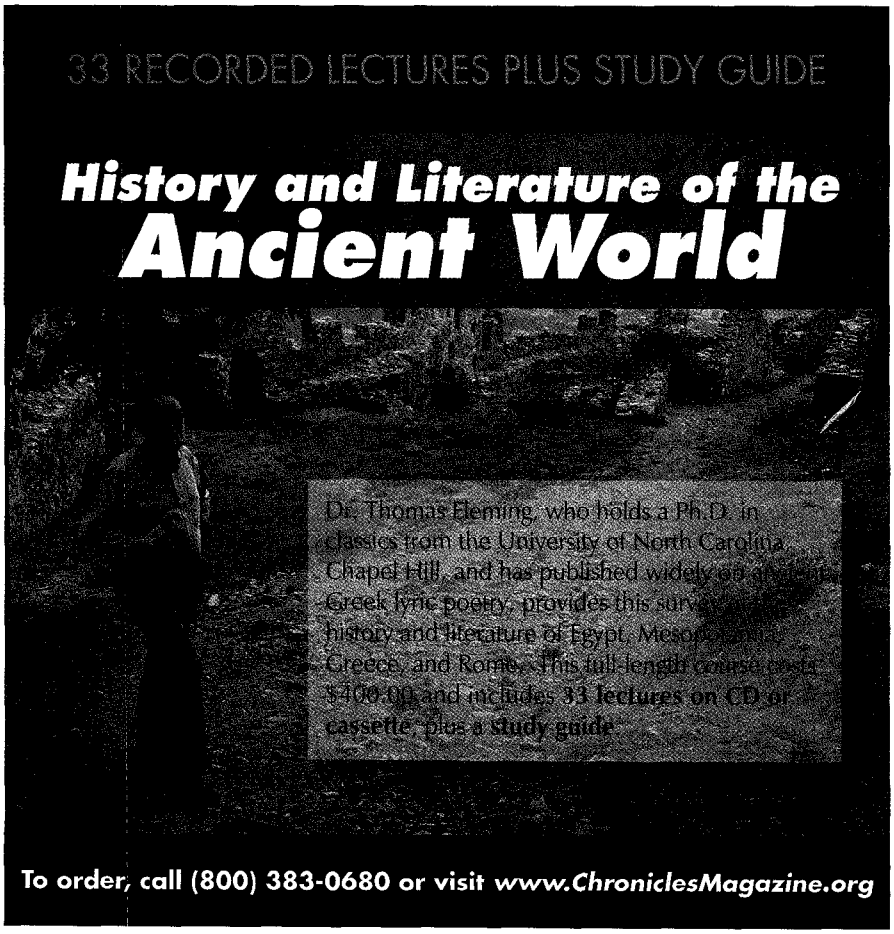
One can see why the Coen brothers were drawn to McCarthy's novel. All their films invoke chance as the ultimate arbiter in life. From their first feature, *Blood Simple*, to *The Man Who Wasn't There*, they have indulged a smart-alecky existentialism that cleverly sneered at the very notion that life has any rhyme or reason. Events happen, their characters suffer or prosper, that's all. No appeal to a higher order of meaning. Nothing makes any sense. The one redeeming element in *No Country* is that, under McCarthy's metaphysically astringent influence, the Coens' sneer has vanished. We are not encouraged to smirk when Bell makes his stoically mournful remark about God not showing up in his life. And the film includes from the novel the uncinematic moment in which Bell recounts a dream of salvific longing in which he sees his long-dead father on horseback. As Bell tells his wife, he was

> carryin fire in a horn the way people used to do and I could see the horn from the light inside of it. . . . And . . . I knew that he was goin on ahead and that he was fixin to make a fire somewhere out there in all that dark and all that cold and I knew that whenever I got there he would be there. [McCarthy eschews punctuating for ellipses.]

The Coens have honored this poignant moment with Jones' marvelously underplayed, moving, and honest reading of McCarthy's words. Perhaps it is here that McCarthy and the Coens do follow Yeats after all, in Bell's simple wish to find his way into a country that is for old men, a country that affords the soul the permanence of genuine love. Will McCarthy discover God coming into his works ahead? Will the Coens?

I hadn't intended to give *No Country* a good review. I initially thought its absent ending pretentious, a strained version of a tired theme: In an absurd universe, meaning has gone distressingly absent without our willing leave. While writing this review, however, I had to admit that the film provoked thoughts and feelings that we all need to confront, and a tidy resolution might not have promoted such an accounting, to borrow Chigurh's word. I am still annoyed by the unanswered plot questions, but I have to commend the Coens for taking such a commercial risk in a medium that counts on pleasing people in the tens and hundreds of millions to recoup its investment.

The acting is excellent all round. Brolin is stolid and determined as the big resourceful lug being chased by Chigurh and several more or less ordinary humans besides, including Woody Harrelson, who is very funny as a crazed wise-guy gun for hire. Jones, as always when he gets a worthy script, makes you believe in his character as few other actors could. And Bardem makes Chigurh exactly the existential killer you imagine him to be when reading the book, with a mirthless smile and eyes that are completely dead to all human sympathy. This may not be a great film, but it is certainly one of the Coens' better efforts.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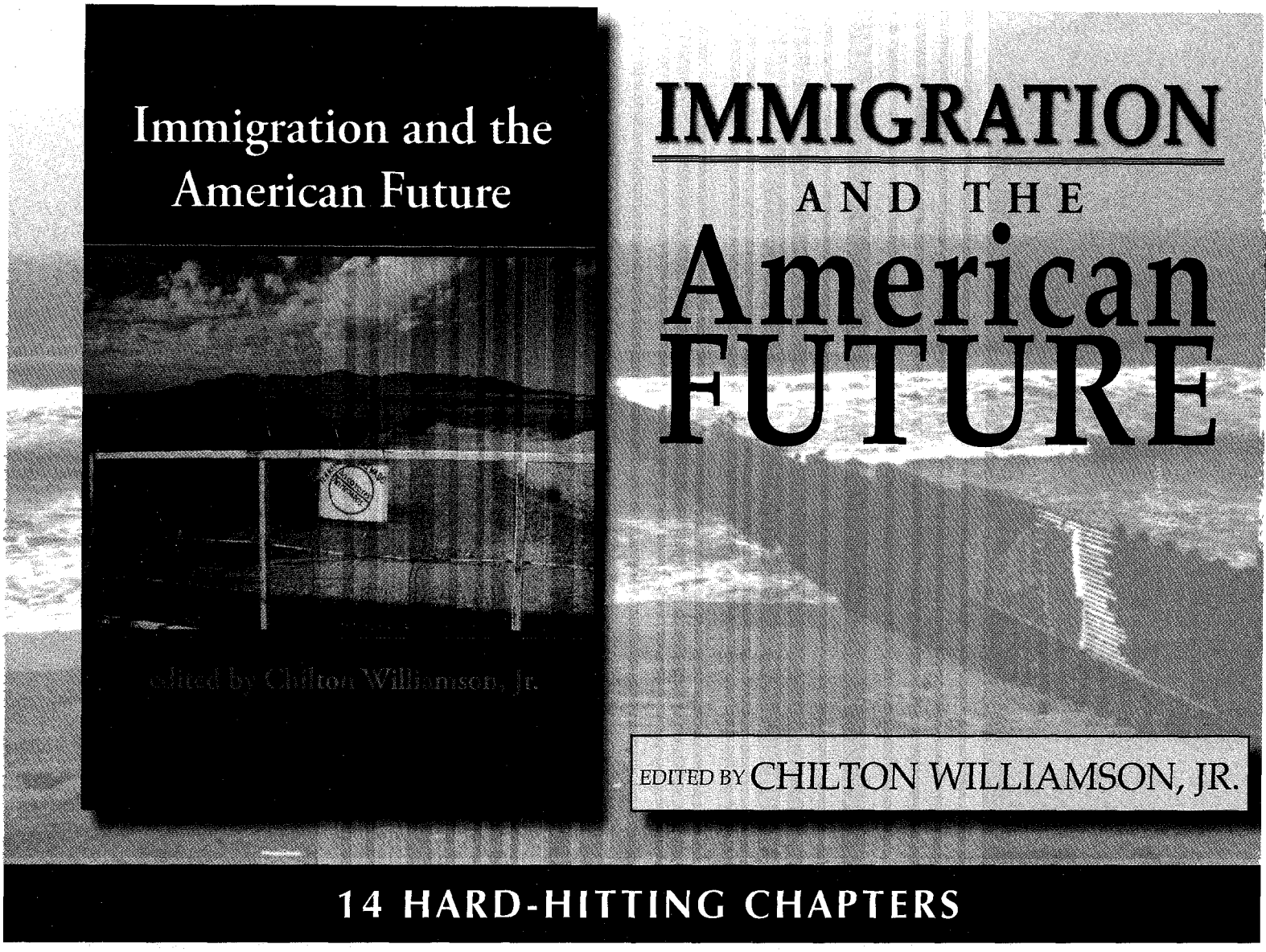

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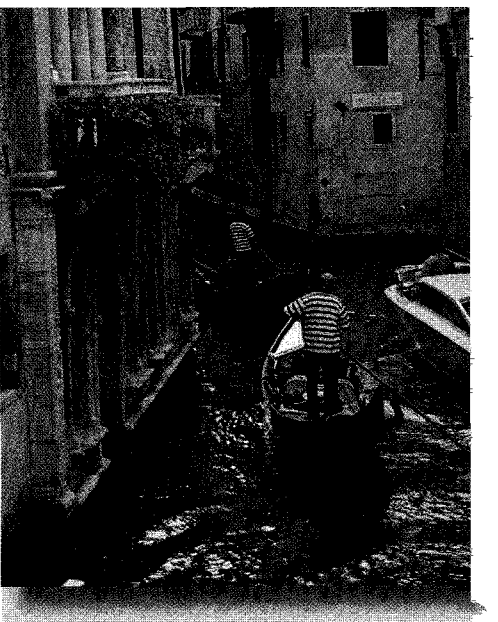

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